Issue 36: 4th Birthday Bumper Edition

JANUARY 1999

Studs Up

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The Oz Fans' Perspective

Raul's masterclass No 1. - The Kick-off

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Interview

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PLUS - The COMPLETE New South Wales Super League preview.
PLUS - Invasion of the Cradle Snatchers
PLUS - Muscat's White Line Fever
PLUS - A frank look at the Olyroos squad
PLUS - Big John joins the 100 club (and the 300 club!)

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An Apology...

A number of readers and subscribers have protested to the SU offices about the use of the unsavoury language in SU35.

The editorial staff at SU thought long and hard about asterisks and other assorted symbols, but at the end of the day chose to run the interview in its unadulterated format.

For us to go one step further and highlight one of the controversial remarks was to overstep the boundary.

We unreservedly apologise to anyone who may have been offended by our lack of discretion.

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Disclaimer:

This is a FANZINE, and should be viewed accordingly!! The opinions expressed in these bits of paper have been developed through years of watching, reading, playing , thinking, sleeping and generally living soccer since Oz last qualified for the World Cup finals. Therefore, no offense or offence is intended and none should be taken. Read, digest, and get in touch.

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Carlton - Taking the Next Step.

But to where? And who is going with them?

There have been some turbulent times for various clubs in the history of the national soccer league, that's for sure. But with the introduction of the new 'franchise' type clubs came the hope that stability would become the league's latest catchword. Yet Carlton, after appearing to be built on solid foundations with laudable long-term goals, has taken less than two years to undergo a complete transformation. Well, not yet, but just stick around for a while....

CSC has been wracked by rumours virtually since the off-season. Sooner or later, a consortium would come in and turn the sleeping infant into Melbourne's favorite child. Well, it seems that day is almost upon us. One by one the original directors snuck off back to their day gigs until it seemed that only Lou Sticca remained when it came to answering the media's calls. As the general manager, he was always likely to hold a high profile within club ranks, but whereas Jack Reilly and Eddie Krncevic shared press space in the early days, recent months have seen Lou almost become Carlton Soccer Club. Barely a day went by without his name cropping up in the press, and once rumours regarding the club's sale gained momentum, there was only ever going to be one spokesman.

As it stands, a new four-man team is expected to take over and although Sticca will remain as the club's general manager. The club is looking to play home matches at Olympic Park, possibly on Friday nights, and if formidable business links with ARL newboys Melbourne Storm can be developed, major renovations of Olympic Park in the near future cannot be discounted.

Like last season, Carlton will finish their regular season campaign at Olympic Park, due to the AFL bulldozing their way back on to Optus Oval. A real pity that. The Blues are going to miss out on the visit of Perth Glory on April 11, one of the few matches that Carlton could promote with any real legitimacy when it comes to top quality soccer.

So, that little hiccup aside, it seems like everyone might live happily ever after, eh? Well, there are certain aspects of the new group's strategy which may require closer scrutiny as time progresses.

First up, you've got to be curious over the involvement of Peter Jess, who has made his reputation as a hard-nosed AFL players' agent. It is no secret that Jess is aiming to become a FIFA-registered agent, and with Carlton having a talented bunch of young players - a couple of which stand to earn Carlton a significant sum of money - Jess is primed to become the big winner in the new arrangement. How FIFA views the idea of registered agents being part-owners of national league clubs will be viewed with keener than usual interest.

John Ribot is another name to be consistently linked with the Blues, but even if he doesn't hold an official position within the new structure, his influence may be just as valuable. His Super League slouch with the ARL was memorable, whichever side you took at the time, and if Ribot's Storm and Jess' Blues can convince Kennett's Cabinet to loosen the pursestrings, memories of the Docklands Stadium being built specifically for soccer/rugby will be a distant memory.

With the marketing success that is the Melbourne Storm, Carlton can reasonably expect help with their marketing strategies if it means Olympic Park can be filled every week instead of every fortnight. But one wonders whether the anticipated success of the 'New Blues', possibly even on the same scale as Perth and Northern Spirit, will encourage talk of a breakaway competition in soccer. If Ribot thought the likes of Arthurson and Co. were recalcitrant, what the hell will he make of our traditional club administrators?

Hmmm, and they thought David Hill was revolutionary.....

The reaction from certain NSL quarters over the admission of the Auckland Kings to the Ericsson Cup is not exactly what SU had hoped for.

Auckland - Why the hysteria?

Perhaps it was inevitable. Auckland Kings had not even 'officially' been granted entry into next season's Ericsson Cup competition before the knives, er, make that machetes, were out. Making sure the new year kicked off in controversial mode yet again, Sydney Olympic general manager Frank Martin let fly with a stinging attack on the governing body, reminding SocAus boss Basil Scarsella until that mysterious 'five year plan' surfaced there were to be no major alterations to the structure of the national league.

This particular pot had been simmering after almost a year, of course. The whole concept of an Auckland team had been debated for the umpteenth time through the media in March last year, when a certain David Hill was in charge, but the debate was fairly one sided - the Kings were coming.

A year is as good as an era in Australian soccer, however, and Hill's departure has again raised hope for the traditional clubs who continue to look for every conceivable angle in an effort to raise public and media opposition to the Kiwi entry. Even the question of airfares has been poo-pooed, but they were using that same argument before Perth gained admission too. To be perfectly blunt, their lack of vision is appalling.

Okay, we'll be perfectly polite. The attitude of the traditional clubs is somewhat, er, disappointing. For years they have complained about clubs being axed from the league, even using arguments such as creating a larger platform of opportunity for the youth players of this country. But at what point does the Ericsson Cup become a sheltered workshop for the traditional clubs, as opposed to genuine expansion and genuine wider community involvement?

Auckland, like Perth and northern Sydney, have a ready made market for top quality soccer. And compared to what they have been offered in the past, the Ericsson Cup represents top quality soccer. There seems no reason why (presumably) Ericsson Stadium wouldn't be packed once the Kings made it into the top half of the table. And that is perhaps what irks the traditionalists most - the vision of a Kiwi team coming in, fielding a virtual national side and dominating "their" competition.

This selfish paranoia reminds us of Kevin Sheedy prior to the West Coast Eagles entry into the Victorian Football League. Maybe the VFL *did* die with their inclusion, but the AFL was born - and a much stronger competition was developed. Would it be so wrong if Australia was the pioneer of a truly Southern Pacific competition?

In case nobody has noticed, the Auckland situation has almost been forced upon us. Australian clubs have nowhere else to go. Charlie Dempsey and his family have obviously decided that an Oceania Club Championship is still not ready for the drawing board, despite FIFA's constant noises about a World Club Championship.

He may have a point. The prospect of South Melbourne or Marconi meeting Real Madrid or Cruzeiro defies imagination and until the region can produce two or three super clubs then the prospect of Brisbane or Perth meeting Inter Milan or Boca Juniors remains a daunting one.

If one of the Oceania 'super clubs turns out to be Auckland, so be it. At least it will drive the Australian clubs to higher levels. And while one long-term ramification of the Kings' entry will be to strengthen the Kiwis' national team, at least it will create a real contest in Oceania. For football to really progress in the region, we need at least a two-horse race.

Er, not withstanding that aberration last October, of course.

Meanwhile, in our own backyard....

As we go to print it seems yet another NSL club is losing the battle against dwindling attendances, declining membership base and an indifferent attitude from the public and media.

We shouldn't be too surprised. The bloated nature of the competition means that the shedding of clubs is inevitable, but the decision ultimately remains with the clubs to either bow out gracefully while the debt is manageable or suffer the embarrassment of calling in the receivers further down the track.

There is a number of clubs with major financial problems, with some having to face the realistic possibility of facing insolvency over the next two years. It would be sad to see national league clubs drop one by one, but are the club administrators too proud to face economic reality in time?

Frank Martin may have some misplaced reservations about the inclusion of Auckland, but his observation that "clubs can't pay players wages on the returns through the gates and sponsors" is the brutal truth. His suggestion that crowd figures for the league are being propped up by the attendance in Perth and North Sydney also bears significant weight.

The crowd level is perhaps at its most chronic in Victoria, where all four clubs are experiencing crowd figures well below expectations (and hopes), but the regional clubs are also under heavy strain. Without significant corporate sponsorship at national level we cannot kid ourselves any longer - a number of incumbent NSL clubs are headed for the graveyard, maybe not this year, but certainly within five.

The calls from clubs for the governing body to release a five-year plan are a double-edged sword. Many of the clubs wouldn't see their names present in a proposed 2004 Pacific League, so why would they vote to implement such a plan anyway?

In the case of Sydney United, it is undeniable that the club has been responsible for some of the highlights and lowlights of the national soccer league throughout their sixteen-year history at that level.

It seems remarkable that the club only really started to lose it grip once it tried to expand its supporter base. With the hardcore base it had, it may well have survived beyond 2000. It seems in the eyes of the Sydney public, the damage had already been done. It is a paradox that faces a number of the traditional clubs, and given the lessons of the Sydney United experiment, there seems little reason to suggest the others would consider following their example.

Many of them feel little need to be threatened. While their attendances hover around the 5-6,000 mark they feel they can point to the Gippslands and Canberra's of the league and demand the axe start at the bottom. It is this blinkered attitude that has prevented Australian soccer from producing a real "super" club. One the rest of the league can hope to emulate one day. Who is the most admired club in the country, and what have they ever really achieved outside this country? (Don't worry, you won't spend too much time away from your knitting....)

Back at the other end of the scale, if this is to be Sydney United's final national league season, we can only hope they continue to play an important role in Australian soccer, even if it is at state level. After producing so many excellent players for a variety of Australian national teams, it would be a sad day indeed if that tradition was to die as well.

A WORLD CUP EVERY TWO YEARS?

"I'm calling for a clear declaration: Do we want national teams Or do we only want club football?" **- Sepp Blatter**

During his time as FIFA general secretary, Sepp Blatter must have watched with angst as the international football calendar became an overblown behemoth that threatened to swallow the game and all participants. In recent times, the struggle between FIFA and UEFA has resembled a contest to see who could be first to exhaust the world's top players. But as an increasing number of players cite 'tiredness' as a reason for sub-standard performances, the game's top administrator appears ready to try and restore some semblance of normality to the players' lives.

Sadly, although not surprisingly, the idea was immediately dismissed as "nonsense" by UEFA chief Lennart Johansson, with the Europeans likely to be the biggest losers in a global restructuring. On that score they will have few sympathizers. For decades European clubs have been guilty of raping the less-financial regions of the world without putting much tangible effort into developing the potential nurseries.

But that is not the only reason for UEFA reluctance. Johansson must still be smarting over his short loss to Blatter in last year's FIFA presidential race, and any move by Blatter to dilute the power of UEFA was certain to be met with hostility.

Johansson can hardly be seen to be on the players' side, however. UEFA have only recently expanded their (club) Champions League to 32 teams next season, and the seeded clubs can expect to play a ridiculous 17 matches if they are to win the trophy. Add at least two more if you are required to go through the preliminary phase. Add anything between 34 and 40 league matches, between 5 and 11 domestic cup matches, and the now traditional television-sponsored pre-season tournaments, and it is not unusual for players to be asked to play between 60 and 70 matches per season. Which is fine, if international football did not exist.

Blatter is correct to bring into sharp focus the question that inevitably polarizes fans, players and administrators alike. The old conundrum of club versus country. He believes that international football is in grave risk of becoming an anachronism at a time when it should be cementing its place at the apex of the pyramid.

Although details of the Blatter plan are yet to be released, holding the World Cup Finals every two years would be a step in redressing an overwhelming imbalance which has seen some continental championships reduced to a laughing stock. Squabbles over the release of key players from their clubs has seen an increasing number of nations field virtual reserve teams at major events, and there is no doubt that a complete overhaul of the international calendar is essential if this most distasteful of scenarios is to be avoided in the future.

The best solution would be for each confederation's regional championship to 'double-up' as World Cup qualifiers. That way every nation would have plenty of meaningful fixtures every two years, even colonial outposts like Australia. A handshake agreement between Blatter and IOC chief Juan Antonio Samaranch has suggested that the World Cup Finals and Summer Olympics should not be held in the same year. No problem. Hold the World Cup finals in the odd years and the regional championships in the even years. Makes perfect sense, does it not?
Ah, if only it were that simple....

The major contributor to fixture congestion in the 1990s has been the introduction of bi-annual confederation championships in regions that previously held their championships either every four years or not at all. The CONCACAF Gold Cup has expanded to include teams outside its confederations, while the CONMEBOL championship has followed suit - all in the name of extra television revenue, of course. And naturally the Africans doubled the frequency of their regional championship, while even Oceania have now got a regional championship up and running.

All of which has driven a wider wedge between national federations and club management, key figures in the sport who had already developed an uneasy relationship through the constant release of talented juniors, a result of João Havelange's introduction of numerous successful under-age tournaments - a vital, educational tool in the development of quality players.

Yep, you guessed it, these tournaments must remain. Pitching the world's best young talent against each other before they have had all their unorthodox tendencies removed by 'professional' coaches has made for some memorable tournaments, but just as importantly, the modern day player's education is not complete without an introduction to the jet-setting lifestyle which is the norm of the future.

So can we all have our cake and eat it too? Can it all be squeezed into an ongoing two-year timeframe? Only if common sense prevails. Holding a full-blown qualifying competition every two years will put an enormous strain on everybody, so the introduction of Davis Cup style World Group may provide a realistic option. Let's say for arguments sake that the World Cup Finals are reduced to a 24-team format. The organizing committee would still require six months or thereabouts to finalize arrangements after the draw is complete, so the WC qualifiers would need to be completed by December in each 'even' year.

Nothing extraordinarily new there, but national teams should not be required to play more than a dozen matches in order to qualify for the finals. Preliminary group phases should be used (as they are now) to weed out the minnows before the traditional heavyweights enter the final qualifying phase. This should mean that the majority of top players would not be required by their national teams for more than two sets of qualifying matches each year. 'Sets' because the idea of releasing players for one match must surely be consigned to the rubbish bin.

It is time to follow the lead of most major European countries and introduce a two to four week break, allowing national federations to complete a four match qualifying series in the space of a fortnight. Possibly even more matches if the sensible thing is done and group matches are played in the one country. Remember, money talks, and some federations are happy to play away if it means more money in the coffers, and less time in aeroplanes.

Okay, so there are a LOT of ifs and buts. But theoretically, is it possible? Someone's gotta try.

	Even Year	Odd Year
Jan	1st round Confederation qualifiers	
Feb		
Mar		
Apr	**Confederation Club Champs**	
May	2nd round Confederation qualifiers	
Jun (two weeks)	**World Club Championships**	**World Club Championships**
Jul (three weeks)		**WORLD CUP FINALS**
Aug		
Sep	Last round Confederation qualifiers	1st Confederation club qualifiers
Oct		
Nov		2nd Confederation club qualifiers
Dec	**Confederation Championships.**	

Muscat's White Line Fever

When Kevin Muscat's latest disciplinary problems made headlines recently, South Melbourne fans would have smiled and nodded knowingly that 'their' boy had changed little since his transfer to Wolves. Firstly, Charlton Athletic's Matt Holmes threatened to sue the Aussie full-back. Holmes was injured in a challenge with Muscat when their clubs met in a first division match last February and, as a result of injuries sustained in that match, hasn't played since. He has suffered through three agonising operations and has had a metal rod inserted in his left leg. Civil law allows Holmes three years in which to sue Muscat and plans to do so if he can't play professional football again.

Several days later, Muscat became embroiled in another ugly incident. His 66th minute challenge on Norwich City's Craig Bellamy at a first division match at Carrow Road resulted in the Welsh international being stretchered off with a knee injury that required ten stitches and that Canaries manager Bruce Rioch described as "almost like a puncture". Rioch was so incensed that he ran on to the pitch in a blind rage and had to be physically ushered back to the dug-out. Even Wolves coach Colin Lee was stunned by the challenge and didn't, as managers usually do with any controversial incident, play down its severity or even claim that his view was obscured by a pylon, claiming that if Muscat did go over the top of the ball "we will have to investigate".

Curiously Muscat, who was due to serve a suspension because of accumulated bookings, wasn't even booked in either incident but the referee will review his tackle at Carrow Road. Following Matt Holmes' threat to sue Muscat, this latest controversy has thrown into doubt Muscat's entire playing future in European football. A player constantly on suspension is of no use to any professional team, particularly in light of FIFA's policy of clamping down on over-the-top challenges and tackles from behind.

Muscat's white line fever was evident from the beginning of his career. As a teenager he showed a willingness to mix-it with opponents much older and physically stronger and never took a backward step. It's rare to see a 19-year-old playing with the cynicism of a Claudio Gentile. At South Melbourne, a group of fans ran a highly popular 'golden booking' competition where they would try and predict which minute Muscat would get booked. Needless to say, there weren't too many jackpots. Seasoned Muscat watchers would knowingly pick a minute in the first quarter-of-an-hour and pocket the kitty (particularly if Danny Tiatto was his opponent). What Muscat's disciplinary problem has done is obscure and threaten the career of a player who has the ability to become the Socceroo's right-back for the next decade. As if to highlight his talent, two weeks after the game at Carrow Road, he scored a stunning long-range, last minute winner at Ipswich Town in a vital promotion [illegible].

Muscat captained Australia's 1993 World Youth Cup team where his assured displays and calm leadership played its part in the young Socceroos last four finish. Muscat also impressed in Australia's 3-1 win in Budapest in 1997, coming on as a second-half substitute. In the 88th minute, and with the score tied at 1-1, he thrashed home a shot from the edge of the penalty area and then crossed for Aurelio Vidmar to complete the scoring in the 90th minute.

His impact on this match would no doubt have impressed El Tel but it was Robbie Slater who played as the right wing-back in the World Cup qualifiers. Slater was certainly more suspect defensively than Muscat but his experience and temperament probably led to his selection. El Tel probably feared that an over-the-top Muscat challenge in Teheran could have resulted in Holy War.

Muscat's career is in his own hands. How far he finally goes in the game ultimately depends on how capable he is of avoiding suspensions and controversy. He should take a closer look at the likes of Desailly, Thuram and Campbell who proved at France '98 that stopping opponents doesn't mean having to foul or maim them first.

If he doesn't, we may have to get the old South Melbourne 'golden booking' school out of mothballs.

GET THE BOOK OUT!

Red Card to the *Melbourne Knights* after they 'allegedly' trashed the visitors' changerooms after their controversial 2-2 at Newcastle. Soccer Australia is investigating, and may also consider the action in the car park after the match, where Sang-Chul Yoon and a couple of Knights players 'allegedly' exchanged pleasantries. We await their report with interest. Speaking of which, the pace of the investigation is almost worth a yellow. See us back here next month....

And after taking longer than Steve Bucknor to make a decision, we can't go past a **Red Card** to *Peter Velappan*, Asia's soccer supremo who labeled FIFA's decision to allocate only two places to Asia (not including Japan's and South Korea's direct entry) a disgrace.

What IS disgraceful is Peter's gall in actually asking for more World Cup places for the world's worst performed confederation at France '98.

We would have thought that after the staggeringly inept performances of the Asian teams (South Korea and Saudi Arabia in particular) that FIFA would have been justified in taking a place away from Asia. Pete, if you want more places for Asia at future World Cups, prove that you deserve it on the playing field. The World Cup shouldn't be a sheltered workshop.

Red card to the thieves who smashed up Sutherland Sharks HQ and shot through with a fair stack of club memorabilia, including all of the club's 1998 Premiership medals, plus shirts from some major overseas clubs signed by players including Sweden, Manchester City, Australia, Dortmond, Ghana and many more. Also, a tartan Manchester Utd cap (with 30 years of badges on it) was taken and the clubhouse and canteen were damaged. If anyone hears anything about said items they should do the appropriate thing. And we all know what that is.... (LATE NEWS.... A 13 year old has apparently been charged over the theft. We'll try and give ya more info next month.)

And while we're at it, a **Red card** can go to the thieves who've been, er, collecting Carlton memorabilia from the Social Club. Apparently most of it was AFL related, but the possibility of stuff going missing on soccer match days cannot be discounted. Once again, keep ya ears open please.

Red card (with a right to appeal) to *Bernie Mandic*, manager of Mark(o) Viduka, if Fergus McCann is to be believed. The farcical scenes at Heathrow Airport - where Viduka and Mandic suddenly arrived and attempted to board a plane to Malaga with the Celtic squad for a spot of training - was totally against the agreement that Celtic and IMG had set in place for the next phase of the ongoing transfer saga. What Mandic hoped to achieve, besides the obvious headlines, is difficult to fathom. As if Mark(o) didn't have enough problems!!!

Yellow card to *South Melbourne* for their inability to screen Channel Nine programmes in the social club prior to matches. Why the fuss? Australia was at a critical point in an Ashes battle with the Poms and quite a few SunSmart people were happy to drink in the bar and watch the Test. "Sorry mate", came the reply from numerous bar staff and club officials, "We just can't get it... for some reason it just doesn't come through..." We can understand why they can't get Optus Vision. But Channel Nine?

Footnote: In SU35 we gave a yellow card to the crew at Sports Australia (and others) for not coming to grips with Harry Karl (aka known as Hrvoje Karl, Karl Hrvoje and various other combinations of letters). But, after contacting the Knights' helpdesk we've discovered that the correct spelling is actually HRVOYE KARL. After a bit of prompting we managed to work out that phonetically is should read HURDA-VOYEUR KARL, although there was some confusion over whether this was acceptable in Croatia?!? (Apparently the v should be present between the R and the A.) Hope this helps out any journos or commentators that may be reading.

With the Sydney Olympics peeping over the horizon, the eve of a two-match series against South Korea's Olympic team seems as good a time as any to assess the Olyroos' progress.

But Will It Be Alright On The Night?

The tour of the Chinese Under-23 squad last year not only highlighted the level of improvement required before the Olyroos become a medal contender, but showed that the competition is likely to be tougher than we all thought.

With an increasing number of Olyroos moving overseas (see ya, Tansel) Blanco has little time to build a cohesive team. The squad for the South Korean series is made up mostly of locally-based Olyroos but also includes Burnley's Mark Robertson, West Ham's Chris Coyne and Rafael Bove of Heerenveen. If Raul Blanco was choosing an XI to play in the Olympics tomorrow who would he choose?

Perth's Danny Milosevic is the standout 'keeper. Playing for a successful club has put him in the public eye and he has gained considerable experience despite his age. His only local rival is the Knights' Joe Didulica but a late possibility is NEC Breda's ex-South Melbourne and AIS 'keeper Peter Zois. Milosevic's only genuine rival for the starting spot in 2000 would appear to be Mark Bosnich, who has repeatedly claimed to be "definitely available" for Sydney. Is that an offer too good for Raul to refuse?

Defensively Raul has several options. Hayden Foxe (Sanfreece) and Carlton's Simon Colosimo are vying for the sweeper's position. Foxe has the edge in terms of reliability and has more international experience, but the Blue is such a skilful, attacking sweeper that may get the nod. Perhaps the answer is to use Foxe as a man marker in a 3-5-2 formation where his aggression and ability in the air could be valuable. Con Blatsis is a candidate for the other marking role but having spent the last six months out injured, doubts will remain over his ability against quicker opponents. Rumours suggest he may be lucky to see more than a few games this season, pushing him even further down the pecking order.

Sebastian Sinozic would partner Foxe in the centre of defence, despite missing a lot of club football with the Wolves. The two wingbacks should be Tansell Baser and Brett Emerton. It's doubtful whether any player has improved as much as Baser in the last year. The ex-South Melbourne defender was brought to the club by Frank Arok and looked out of his depth initially but he has dramatically improved in the areas of physique, tactics and technique. Additionally, he is sufficiently versatile to play at sweeper or in the centre of defence if changes are required.

Brett Emerton is the right wingback. He has been earmarked for great things for a while now, but is still too inconsistent and doesn't score regularly enough. At this stage of his career he should be one of the NSL's most dominant players but there's no denying his speed and ability. The defensive wild card could turn out to be Chris Coyne, who looked poised and confident in training. Good displays against the Koreans will ensure his enthusiasm for the 2000 project remains high, and let's face it; Blanco can use all the European-based enthusiasm he can get.

Raul Blanco's biggest selection headache remains in midfield. It's doubtful if any Aussie coach has ever had so much attacking talent to choose from. Bresciano, Damianos, Grella, Culina, Wehrmann, Robertson, Rizzo and maybe even Coyne are just a few of the more obvious candidates. But finding the right balance could determine how successful we are in 2000. Stacking the side with too many attacking players could be a defensive disaster against more experienced opposition.

Wehrmann hasn't been the same player since his injury problems in Malaysia eighteen months ago and has developed an annoying habit of holding on to the ball for too long, but Bresciano, with his explosive pace, eye for a goal and dribbling ability, deserves a place in the first eleven. Damianos has great vision and passing ability and is probably the best playmaker in the team. Vince Grella is another midfield candidate but his game lacks the refinement of Bresciano and he tends to waste too many balls trying to do a 'Platini' when quite often a simple ball is required. Jason Culina is a neat and clever midfielder but may eventually lose out to Nick Rizzo's experience.

Up front the O'roos depth is probably the weakest part of the team - lucky for Raul he has wunderkind Harry Kewell to call on. But who will partner Harry Kool. Curcija is the current favourite and is having a good season at club level but his all-round game is poor and he tends to ball-watch. Kosta Salapasidis is a rival but, after an unsuccessful trial at Torino, isn't the same player who scored four against Argentina in the World Youth Cup. Mayne it's time to consider that second wildcard.....Wonder what John Aloisi does on his days off? After all, there's no point introducing him at the last minute.

It could be a lot worse.....

1 Milosevic (Bosnich)
4 Colosimo
3 Sinozic 6 Foxe
2 Emerton 8 Baser
7 Damianos (Zelic)
10 Bresciano 8 Rizzo
9 Curcija (Aloisi) 11 Kewell

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And you thought SU36 wasn't a bad read!

SU37 promises to be even more berserk, with:

- a COMPLETE assessment of the Olyroos recent efforts against South Korea and China
- a COMPLETE assessment of the Matildas chances in this year's World Cup
- a COMPLETE assessment of the Young Socceroos chances at this year's World Youth Cup in Nigeria
- a COMPLETE (late) preview of the Victorian Premier League
- a COMPLETE history of Get the Book out! - Check out the list of EVERYBODY who has ever received a card in this most inauspicious of forums.....

Oh, and if you wanna discuss any of the above in advance, you can always drop in to the Cricket Club Hotel, Clarendon St, South Melbourne prior to the Hellas/Croartzia match on Feb 7. We shouldn't be too hard to spot. We'll be the ones in the Studs Up t-shirts!

Jamie McMasters may soon turn out to be a household name.
Whether he likes it or not.....

Invasion of the Cradle Snatchers.

- By Harry Georgiadis

The recent decision by Jamie McMasters, Leeds United's 16-year-old apprentice from Central Coast, to renounce his Australian citizenship (and instead opt to play for England) is not the first, nor will it be the last, instance of an Aussie player turning his back on the green & gold. Craig Johnston, Tony Dorigo, Sasa Ilic, Josip Simunic and Ante Saric are just a few of the better-known examples. But at least they (and their families) were allowed to make their decisions as adults, presumably, responsible enough and old enough to decide for themselves. McMasters' situation has highlighted a much darker scenario, where kids as young as fifteen and sixteen are being coerced into turning their backs on a potential Socceroo career in an effort to further their club career.

Matthew Hall's recent interview with Alan Hill, Director of Leeds United's Youth Academy, has brought the problem to public attention. McMasters joined Leeds United; it seems, on the proviso that he renounce Australia and play instead for England. He was subsequently selected for England Under 16's against Turkey on January 12. Still smarting from being forced to release Harry Kewell for the Olyroos last year (even though he farcically 'injured' a hamstring and was unable to come to Australia) Alan Hill bluntly pointed out that "if a player chooses to play for Australia then we are wasting our time".

By signing only players committed to playing for a British country, Leeds hope to ensure their young stars don't spend their time travelling to and from Australia. 14-year-old Sydney schoolboy Matthew Hunter has already been earmarked by Leeds to play for Scotland because of his Scottish parentage. Alan Hill claims, with a straight face no doubt, that they place these youngsters under no pressure to decide who they want to represent at international level.

This is a fairly new problem for Australian soccer. Previously young Aussie players have followed the traditional path to international recognition moving seemlessly from schools football to the AIS, National Soccer League and then, if they are good enough, selection for the Under 17's, Under 20's, Olyroos and the Socceroos. The problem really first became noticeable when young players began by-passing the NSL altogether, leaving Australia as 14 or 15-year-olds.

In the past, players would be capped before leaving the country now they began leaving in droves as un-capped schoolboys and, because of their parentage, eligible to play for anyone of three or four national teams. Suddenly players like Foxe, Neill and Kewell began packing their bags for Europe as soon as their AIS commitments were finalised. Lucas Neill, rumour has it, was on the verge of being selected for the country of his father's birth, Northern Ireland. It is also sobering to consider that it was probably only Eddie Thomson's decision to select Kewell for the Socceroos match against Chile in Antofagasta that averted his selection for the England Youth team. (Whatever you may think of ET, his most lasting legacy to Aussie soccer could well be Harry Kewell's appearance in a Socceroo shirt.)

In the last two years, young players have even been by-passing the AIS altogether, leaving to join English clubs from high school or the ubiquitous academy's springing up all over the country. It won't be long before clubs are loitering outside maternity wards with forms and dummies hoping to secure the best young babies in the country. West Ham's academy in Perth is already providing a steady stream of young talent while Leeds United have formal arrangements with Westfield Sports High (Sydney) and Forrestfield United Junior Soccer club in Perth.

In return for financial assistance, Leeds and West Ham get the pick of any talent, all of which is probably a restraint of trade in itself. All of which means that Britain is being inundated with dozens of 15 and 16 year old Aussie kids desperately trying to land a lucrative professional contract.

Predictably, the McMasters controversy had the local soccer community shouting blue murder. The usual assortment of media hacks trotted out the usual assortment of 'personalities' to indignantly plead that someone should do something about the situation quickly and to pull nasty faces at Buckingham Palace. Just as predictably, nobody was forthcoming with any real solutions or showed any genuine understanding of the legalities of the problem. They will all no doubt drift off again until the next pimply-faced 15-year-old Sydney teenager professes their allegiance to Wales, Ireland or England. Or Croatia, Greece or Italy - depending on which side of the fence they sit that week.

The issue certainly isn't as simplistic as some in the media would have you believe. Place yourself in the position of these kids for a moment. Imagine being 14 or 15 (still young enough to be at high school) away from home and thrilled and intimidated, in equal measure, to be playing at a Premier League club. Your lifelong ambition has always been to play at Old Trafford or Highbury. A professional contract can earn you more in a month than your parents would probably earn in a year and by the age of twenty you would have earned enough to buy a decent house and a fast car; a dream beyond most teenagers. You are forced into complex transfer negotiations, probably without an agent, with club officials with enormous contractual experience. You desperately want to impress the club and land a contract but you know that they don't look too kindly on you jetting back to Australia to play for the Joeys or Olyroos. You also realise that you are competing with dozens of other equally determined youngsters for the handful of positions available at a clubs youth team.

It is supply and demand economics at its most brutal, and don't the clubs know it. Alan Hill is adamant that players are placed under no direct pressure to decide which country they should represent but in effect they don't have to. Clubs wield enormous power and McMasters and other Aussies at Leeds would no doubt be fully aware that securing a lucrative contract could ultimately depend on opting to play for a British association. "It has always been my dream to play for the Socceroos ever since I was young" says McMasters "but I've had a lot of advice from people here not to play for Australia".

In effect, McMasters and other young Aussies are being asked to choose between playing at Highbury or playing for the Socceroos, of the distant possibility of playing for Australia or a lucrative professional contract. Lazaridis, Slater etc., have shown that there is no reason why you can't have both. These are sixteen year old kids, unproven and insecure. Clubs are picking on them because they are most vulnerable and are exploiting their vulnerability to a vicious level. They are forcing young Aussies to choose between their club careers and their country because, quite simply, they can. Young Aussies have to tow the line because if they don't there are dozens of young English kids to replace them. It's a monumental decision to make as a 16-year-old but who could blame them for plumping for an international career with a British country if it would further their club career.

So what are the alternatives? How do we convince these kids that a successful club career is compatible with playing for the Socceroos? Can we involve FIFA? Soccer Australia? John Howard? Interpol?

One possible scenario would be to cap these kids as soon as possible at a ridiculously young age before they leave the country. We could arrange dozens of behind-closed doors international friendlies, so that they leave the country as full Socceroos. It would lead to many more Antofagasta's and totally destroy our world ranking's but if it would ensure the McMasters and Co. to play for Australia it would be worth it.

It is important to keep this current 'crisis' in perspective, however, and realise that Australia is simply the latest in a long line of nations who have had their players poached by richer nations.

In the 1930's Argentinians of Italian descent helped the Azzuri win two World Cups while Eusebio, born and raised in the Portuguese colony of Mozambique, was eligible to play for Portugal. In more recent times, France has been quick to 'cap' players from its colonies, including New Caledonia's Christian Karembeu.

One step in the right direction would be for FIFA to narrow its international qualification criteria so that a player is only eligible to play for the country of his birth, the country of his parent's birth (or, if uncapped, to play for a country only after five years residency. As things stand, you can qualify for the country of your grand-uncles or distant ancestors. Ireland has famously exploited this loophole to the extent that anyone with a U2 or Sinead O'Connor CD is eligible to pull on the green shirt. Obviously, such a move by FIFA wouldn't solve our problem, but would be a good starting point.

Secondly players 'capped' at junior level (non full-internationals) should still be allowed to play for another country. For example, McMasters could play for England Under 16's but provided, he wasn't capped at senior level could play for Australia. FIFA could also help by ensuring that the international calendar at all levels is in sync with club commitments to guarantee that there is as little club versus country conflict and disruption as possible. But that's for another article....

McMasters' situation has also highlighted how little assistance Soccer Australia is providing to our young players in Europe. *"There have been letters [from SocAus] sent to my house in Australia but I personally haven't spoken to anyone"* says McMasters and adds *"my dad has contacted them but we haven't heard back. I haven't been able to take anything up"*. We can't help thinking that if ET was still the Socceroos coach he would have probably capped McMasters by now, probably against the Cook Islands last year.

It also highlights the vital need for SocAus to appoint a European co-ordinator (plonk him in the middle of Wimbledon Common or Clapham Junction if you have to) to represent our interests and to provide these kids with an alternative view to the one being drummed into them by English clubs. A respected figure to act for their interests, providing legal advice and even organising regular camps and fixtures. As McMasters pointed out, it's hard to play for Australia when you've never been called up for a fixture. We could even use respected stars like Bosnich, Lazaridis and Kewell to act as mentors and provide these kids with advice and living proof that a successful Premier League career is compatible with playing for the Socceroos. These players can empathise with the predicament of the younger players having gone through similar problems. Mark Bosnich infamously 'retired' from the national side in 1993 for the very same reason. Lazaridis has already taken on such a role at Upton Park and its quite telling that none of the Hammers Aussies have faced McMaster's dilemma. They could try to describe to these kids the satisfaction they derive from playing for the Socceroos and (hopefully) point out that opting to play for a British association is a short-term solution that would almost certainly destroy their senior international career.

A more radical solution could involve using only locally-based players for the Under 17, Under 20 and Olympic teams. Leeds United, and clubs generally, can't do anything about established senior players playing for the Socceroos but the problem is more acute at junior levels as Alan Hall pointed out "the number of times that players have to go back to play for Australia at different levels is too much". English football has little tradition or interest in junior international football (Britain doesn't have an Olympic team) and with the priority given to club football can't comprehend why they should allow young players to leave their club for weeks at a time to play in 'meaningless' fixtures.

You might say this is their problem, but with so many Aussies in Europe, and many more to follow, it is our problem too, and it is threatening to become more acute in the future, particularly with the 2000 Olympics just around the corner and up the road a bit. Yet in a strange twist, the 2000 Olympics may have already been a help for Australia and the national soccer league. Simon Colosimo and Brett Emerton are just two players who have committed themselves to the Olyroos (read NSL) until the Games. They know full well that it is what happens in September 2000 that counts, not what goes on in the Tranmere reserves for the next eighteen months. Colosimo and Emerton, by warning off all talk of an overseas transfer until after the Games, have placed themselves directly under the noses of Blanco and Scheinflug and have thus virtually cemented a spot in the final squad already - something Bill Damianos had within his grasp until a move to a low-profile Greek club.

Unfortunately, in the future, by the time Aussie kids are Damianos' age, a potential international career may have been already stillborn. And that is a situation where everybody loses.
Solving this dilemma to the satisfaction of all parties is quite possibly Basil Scarcella's greatest challenge. If it isn't resolved to Australian soccer's satisfaction we can kiss our chances of building a successful Socceroo team goodbye.

P.S. We should come clean and confess that even Studs Up have a vested interest. The sheer volume of young kids in Britain is making it bloody difficult for amateur statisticians to keep tabs on their whereabouts and progress!

In the Limelight -

Paul Gellard reports on the FA Cup 3rd round - a weekend when more Aussies than usual managed to find themselves amongst the headlines.....

John Filan kept goal for Blackburn Rovers as they advanced to Round 4 with a 2-0 home win over Charlton Athletic. Steve Corica and Kevin Muscat both played full games for Wolves as they won 2-1 at an in-form Bolton Wanderers' side. Shaun Murphy was once again the only Aussie involved in WBA's 1-0 away loss to Division Two side Bournemouth. Rumour has it that Van Blerk could soon be forced to leave England due to work permit problems. John Aloisi came on as a 53rd min sub for Coventry City as they thrashed Division Two strugglers Macclesfield Town at home by 7-0. He did not manage a goal however. Jason Kearton's Crewe side lost 3-1 at home to a struggling Oxford United side, whilst Crystal Palace lost 2-1 at Newcastle United. Craig Foster and Craig Moore both played for Palace with Foster being subbed on 50mins. Jon Brady was an unused sub as Rushden & Diamonds held Leeds United 0-0 at home in the biggest shock of the day. Harry Kewell played a full game for the Premiership side. Scott Guyett played a full game for another Conference side, Southport, as they were finally eliminated from the competition by 2-0 at home to Leyton Orient. Frank Talia performed exceptionally again as Swindon held Barnsley 0-0 at home. Richard Johnson opened Watford's account at White Hart Lane in the first minute but his side were subsequently thrashed 5-2 by an in-form Tottenham side. Stan Lazaridis was subbed on 82mins as West Ham held Third Division Swansea City to a 1-1 draw at home.

Don't Forget to check out our website at:
www.ozemail.com.au/~studsup/first1.htm

Green Rover is wet with anticipation (or is that perspiration?)

SYDNEY SWELTERS

AS SUPER LEAGUE SOCCER SEASON STARTS

The early start for Super League clubs in NSW will test the loyalty of fans still enjoying the cricket, the beach and the Ericsson Cup, but no doubt officials are hoping the supporters will be licking their lips in anticipation of another humdinger of a season.
I somehow doubt it!

Summer sweatthouse, you could call it, the prospect awaiting supporters of the NSW Super League clubs who will not have a pre-season comp to look forward to, but must wade in at the deep end on 6th February. Unless they decide to stay at the beach, in which case they can do that there too.

There are games scheduled for both days of the first weekend and the outer suburbs host all three games on the Saturday, while the inner suburbs the remainder on the Sunday.
Smart thinking!

Nevertheless there are some very intriguing games to kick-off the new season.
Serbian-backed Bonnyrigg White Eagles tackle the Macedonian-based Bankstown City Lions at the thinly disguised Serbian Centre in the southwest.

Old 1st Division rivals and strong district-based clubs, Macarthur Rams and Central Coast clash at Lynwood Park in Sydney's outer southwest.

Blacktown City, model district-based club of the west are at home to poverty-stricken Eastern Suburbs who have been unable to hold onto their coach Joe Watson, after several years with the tiny Scot at the helm. Watson re-appears as the new coach of promoted Fairfield Bulls who let Marshall Soper go after he had won them promotion. The Bulls travel to Wentworth Park, home this year of Ryde City as well as ... Eastern Suburbs. So Watson is back where he left off last season, for one game anyway. These two sides are very old foes from 2nd and 1st Division days and have both come through the divisions at much the same pace, with Ryde getting in first both times.

Looking further ahead, both Easts and Ryde are planning moves to other grounds within the space of the season. Ryde's new ground at Macquarie Uni, a stadium being constructed with Olympic games teams' needs in mind, as well as that of Ryde, should be ready for the 1999 season, while Easts are hastily arranging modifications to the grand old home of track and field sports, Hensley Athletic Field, at Botany, which is opposite the huge Eastgardens shopping complex. They should be able to take up residence some time before April.

Former NSL giants Leichhardt Tigers and Parramatta Eagles are engaged at Lambert Park, the postage-stamp sized ground with the friendly atmosphere and close crowd involvement.
Canterbury Marrickville lock horns with Sutherland Shire at Henson Park a ground in the heart of their territory, which has proven popular with supporters.
A feature of the fixture list is that Central Coast does not play at home until Round 6, unusual in that the club has its own ground and improvements may simply not be ready in time.

Not enough space, probably, to detail the full prospects for every club. (Although we have a fair crack at it starting page 29). That is the role of the official magazines and newspapers. Our task is to look at the shortcomings and suggest improvements as well as getting people talking about the game, however controversial we need to be to achieve that objective.

NSW seems to have turned an about face if President Peter Gray's comments in the new national weekly 'Inside Soccer' are to be given any credence. For years now the Federation has obliged members seeking positions in the Super League and even in 1st Division to have district ties and a junior base. The criteria have also variously included such attributes as own ground, floodlights, covered seating for 800 people.

Now grounds criteria is nothing new, but the idea that there be district links with junior associations has somehow been given the go-by.
Now, did we at Studs Up miss something? Did Green Rover blink, or what?

All of a sudden it is geographical zones, with aspiring clubs hooked up with Ericsson Cup clubs, with an emphasis on the 'up'. Junior associations are linked, but no longer to individual clubs.

In each zone there are several district associations, a few Super League clubs and one Ericsson Cup outfit, thus forming a pyramid system. *Sounds OK.* Previously your passport to eternal riches via the Super League was having an association behind you, or at the very least a junior set of teams capable of playing in Youth League. The extra revenue of entering those teams does help, of course.

Now, we are told, it is all being done for the benefit of the players. There may be merit in all of this too. But it's all a little too sudden and didactic.
Northern Spirit, for instance, has the two feeder clubs north of the bridge in Super League fledglings, Ryde City and Central Coast. A third, Manly-Warringah Dolphins, could emerge as a third prong in the northern attack.

Meanwhile the junior associations of Central Coast, Gladesville Hornsby, Ku-ring-gai and Manly-Warringah are also encouraged to feel part of it all. This is straightforward enough, but the other zones are much more arbitrary and unrealistic. Leaving aside the junior part in the other regions, we have a plan that says that Bonnyrigg, Fairfield Bulls and Macarthur are aligned with Marconi, while Blacktown City and Parramatta Eagles are aligned with Sydney United. This cannot disguise the fact that both senior clubs are in the first 'zone'.

This could be the thin end of the wedge as the two latter clubs are already proposing a joint venture to establish a new club based at Parramatta Stadium, which would be in direct competition with Sydney United, should that club remain in the Ericsson Cup.
Interestingly, when suggested before, neither of these Super League clubs was interested, but having seen the success elsewhere it is evident now that others want a taste.

Meanwhile Canterbury, Leichhardt Tigers, Eastern Suburbs and Bankstown more logically link with Sydney Olympic. Sutherland on the other hand must go with Wollongong Wolves who are some 50 kilometres to their south!

☞ *For a closer look at the prospects of the each Super League club in 1999, turn to page 29.* ☜

Did they REALLY say that?

"I'm extremely disappointed that Newcastle was not prepared to allow the incident to be settled between the clubs and the league administration." - Melbourne Knights vice-president Ivan Skunca after THAT dressing room incident.

"What they should be looking at is where was the coach? Where was anybody of authority and was it preventable? And maybe, do they have to send police with them every time they go on a road trip?" - Newcastle Breakers Chairman Bill Collins return serve, with interest.

Title to remain

Perth may have attracted the early season headlines but when May arrives we strong chance at the title. Harry Georgiadis (South Melbourne) and David Arnold

South Melbourne - by Harry Georgiadis

Two months ago, with South Melbourne eight points behind leaders Perth, few gave them much chance of finishing in the top two. Yet six games later South is again looking down on the rest of the league, an achievement that with the loss of Damianos, Boutsianis and Baser is a testimant to Postecoglou's good use of a depleted squad.

South hasn't been as dominant or impressive as last season but their ability to churn out wins (especially at Lakeside where Marconi and Perth have yet to visit) suggests South will have to suffer a massive collapse to miss out on the double chance. Recent history also suggests that the premier will come from the first two. So can South win another flag?

Victories have been as frequent but less convincing, even against weaker opponents. Ominously they have been, like 1997/98, been playing well in patches but haven't put together a consistent run. They could take some stopping if they do. Their chances could ultimately depend on whether Melbourne hosts the grand final and whether they lose any more players to Europe, particularly Lozanovski. Further losses could seriously undermine their chances.

Baser's loss will require some defensive restructuring and has left Postecoglou with a problem. De Amicis is his obvious replacement at sweeper but this leaves the team short of left-sided defenders. Perennial utility Jason Polak, who has played at right-wing and left-back without complaint, may be the answer.

A more disciplined and improved Steve Iosifidis is the regular right-back but doubts remain over his ability to cope with the best forwards. Orlic has been consistent after missing the grand final but Con Blatsis's imminent return after a lengthy lay-off will be welcomed. Michael Petkovic has been reliable much more this season but the squad lacks goalkeeping depth.

Its in midfield that South is weakest. Lozanovski, suspensions permitting, is the league's best crosser and Ange has given up on the idea of playing him as a wing-back. He struggles defensively and accumulates many bookings in attempting defensive lunges. With Iosifidis at right-back, Loza can just concentrate on attacking. Clarkson continues to put in the effort of three players but without Damianos the side lacks a genuine playmaker. Goutzioulis is hardly an adequate replacement. His departure has also meant Trimboli playing deeper in midfield to compensate. Trimmers is still the league's best player by a considerable distance but it would massively help Souths chances if he spent more time is opposition penalty areas.

In attack, no one has yet been able to cement a regular spot. Curcija and Coveny are the current strike force but were only fringe players last year. Curcija enjoyed a good debut season in 1997 but, seemingly lacking commitment, spent last year largely on the bench. His all-round contribution to the side is poor.

Coveny's has replaced John Anastasiadis on the bench and has surprised. He is playing much more confidently than last season. Anastasiadis, in contrast, was superb last year but is struggling to win a starting place. He lacks pace but his all-round game is better than most players and he could yet fire South to their fourth title.

This is it folks.

The Studs Up 4th Birthday Special 8 Page Lift-out.

Interview with a Formeroo!!!

Greg Stack speaks with ex-keeper, Ron Lord.

With thanks again to John Punshon.

The way Ron Lord took up goalkeeping is a story in itself. At the tender age of seventeen Ron was playing left back for the now defunct Drummoyne club. In his first game against Woonona-Bulli at Bulli Sports Ground he suffered an ankle injury that kept him out of soccer for what he thought would be two months.

Unfortunately the injury took more than a couple of months to heal and he spent many weeks on the sidelines. It was while down watching his team mates play at Drummoyne Oval that he saw their second grade goalkeeper had not turned up. Asking officials if he could fill in that position he was given the number one shirt and so began an outstanding goalkeeping career that would eventually see Ron represent his state and his country and be considered by many to this day to be the greatest Australian goalkeeper.

Now retired from the game and living in the Illawarra I was privileged to have been asked down for lunch to his family home to meet the man who had kept so many of the great forwards of the 50's and 60's scoreless. On his family room wall hang photos of his days in the green and gold and his teammates at Prague and Auburn.

On the floor are spread the contents of a few suitcases filled with all manner of old photos, newspaper clippings, letters and memorabilia. Ron's career at the top lasted nearly twenty years and it should be pointed out in an age where goalkeepers received no protection from referees and wore no gloves. With his lovely wife Kath as the perfect hostess I quickly felt like a part of the family as Ron recounted his career with great affection. It was a truly fascinating experience to listen to a man who had clearly done it all for his club, state and country.

I started off asking Ron about his club career with the highly regarded Prague side of the late 50's and early 60's. The side contained a number of high profile European imports including the legendary Leo Baumgartner the man they called 'Sabrina'.

RL : "He scored a goal once, I forget who it was against. But he took one defender on and beat him took another defender on beat him and left them behind. The goalkeeper came out and he beat the keeper and he was still reasonably well out from the goal. Taking the ball up to the goal line and had time to get down on his hands and knees and just nod the ball over with his forehead. It was sheer arrogance but artistry the way he did it and of cause all the crowd chants "Sabrina Sabrina". He was sheer entertainment and that's what you have got to do, entertain the crowd."

GS : The crowd would come back week in and week out to see what he would do next.

RL "Exactly Conversely you had (Karl) Jaros A lot of people have the feeling that Jaros was a player who gave you one hundred percent and I have that feeling too He was a player who just hated to lose. Even if Karl was playing a game of football on the beach, Karl would still want to win. He had that drive and determination whereas Leo would save himself for the big points in a match He'd nearly always get them for you too. A good footballer and a good bloke. I always got on well with Leo."

GS : Andreas Saghi?

RL "Saghi was a thorough gentleman and a good footballer Wally Tamandl was also a good bloke and footballer and he scored a lot of good goals I remember once in particular he got a cross from the right wing, he laid back took the ball on his chest cooled it down to his feet and just turned in one action. Then bang, it's a goal "

GS : The Nineus brothers, Herbert and Erwin?

RL "Herbert was very strong and at times he was like a raging bull You felt him coming at you, very strong and robust with a terrific left foot Erwin was a good centre-half though he was the type that would never trust his goalkeeper Lets put it another way if Erwin was running back towards goal and you gave him a call for the ball he would'n't pass it to you because I guess he felt it was beneath him to pass the ball back to the goalkeeper He would want to get out of it his way Even though it might mean turning and running towards the sideline and eventually losing the ball, but it was beneath his dignity to pass back to the 'keeper I can't say that I particularly like playing behind Erwin. The best players to play behind were the defenders who did the simple obvious things There was another guy who was similar to Erwin and that was (Mita) Stojanovic a centre-half Both were good footballers but I thought this was a weakness in their game "

GS : Les Scheinflug was one on the left wing.

RL "Yes very good on the left foot Les could kick with his right but I think he used his right foot mainly to stand on (laughing) He could play anywhere on the left side left fullback, wing half or wing. He played in those three positions with Prague and it just depended at the time who you had as coach and how he thought Les would help the team best. I think Les would have preferred the left half position because he was more involved in the game there

GS : The coaches at Prague. Did they have a lot of influence over the side?

RL "We had Harry Brophy Harry was an Englishman who came from Queensland and had played for that state in the early fifties (Uncle) Joe Vlasits was another and Chanbal was a Czechoslavakian who came out in the mid - 60's Leo Baumgartner himself coached for year or two "

GS : How was Leo as a coach?

RL "He was pretty good. There was not a lot of coaching from Leo he just let the players know individually what was expected of them At the time Leo was coach we had a very experienced team and that made a lot of difference Wally Tamandl was also a coach In the years 59 through '64 we had some great players and I guess the coach has to take some kudos for the results but it did make his job a little easier "

GS : You started your career with Drummoyne under the old Association?

RL Yes Drummoyne became defunct in 1950 Drummoyne were the perennial wooden -spooners and as a goalkeeper I was kept busy picking the ball out of the back of the net During most games I was placed in many different and difficult situations and I had to learn how to deal with them This helped to develop my game quickly and I developed a style of playing as a third back patrolling the penalty area. I believe my experience as a fullback also helped as I was not perturbed about leaving the goalmouth Goalkeeping coaching in those days was unknown "

GS : You went to Auburn after Drummoyne.

RL "Yes Once Drummoyne became defunct all players were free agents and able to negotiate with any club that was interested in them I went ahead and joined Auburn and played with them until late 1957, the year the breakaway Federation of Soccer Clubs was formed Along with Joe Marston (and Alan Garside) I would have been one of the last senior players to join the Federation. I was disappointed to leave Auburn as I had made many friends during the 7 years I played with them But the Federation was becoming the stronger of the two competitions so I decided to accept an offer to join Sydney Soccer Club Prague."

GS : Your representative career started in 1950 for New South Wales against Queensland. The other prominent goalkeeper in the 50's was Bill Henderson. Right through that period it was either Ron Lord or Bill Henderson as goalkeeper and to this day you both remain the very best of friends.

RL "First of all I'd like to say that perhaps Billy and I did play the major number of rep games in this period Other goalkeepers who represented through this period that come to mind are Norman Conquest (Metters Canterbury), Jim Jenkins (Woonona-Bulli) Bill Mahoney (Wallsend), Dave Bone (West Wallsend) and Rudy Roth (West Wallsend) Australia has it seems always produced good goalkeepers from the days of the great Jim McNabb in the 40's to the present Mark Bosnich And yes Billy and I are the best of friends and from time to time enjoy a game of golf together "

GS You made your representative debut in 1951 against the touring English F.A. side. Do you remember much about the game or of the experience of being picked for your country?

RL "My first game against the Englishmen was the first of eight games I played against them while they were here It was to be their first match in Sydney I had been selected as goalkeeper in a N S W team to play the Englishmen at the Sydney Showground on Saturday May 19 1951

When I found I had been selected I knew I'd be in for a busy time I had gone down to Wollongong the previous Wednesday to see them play against a combined South Coast side in the opening match of their tour There was a record mid-week crowd (10.500) and South Coast lost (7-0) Australian soccer officials said after this match that the team was the best ever to come to this country

Just as a matter of interest, A Newspaper reported - A new feature of the third-back game was probably the most interesting lesson of the match for the many local and Sydney coaches who attended It was the swivel defence demonstrated by the fullbacks Frank Lock (left) and Harry Bamford (right) When play went down the left wing. Lock moved up near the halfway and immediately Bamford dropped back This strengthened the attack without weakening the defence. As soon as play was switched across field, Lock would rush back and Bamford forward Two Sydney coaches said they would introduce this phase into their clubs

I played in a trial game that was played to select the N.S.W team to play the Englishmen on Saturday May 20th at the Sydney Showground and I was fortunate enough to be selected. Prior to kick-off the England and N.S.W teams lined up in centre field and the Duke of Edinburgh presented each player with a Commonwealth Jubilee Medal.

A newspaper report said "The crowd was 42,000 and the English professionals played with speed and skill to overpower N.S.W by 8 goals to 1. To use an old cliche - thy let the ball do the work. Their skill in control of the ball was a delight to watch. They were very positive in what they did and their passing was very accurate

" Conversely we gave away too much possession away by too many long lofted 'seeking' balls. To put it simply they gave a tradesmanlike performance and we were the apprentices. To their credit they were out to show the Sydney public just what English football is all about and they did just that.

GS : You were at the 'infamous' match were Australia were beaten 17-0 with Norm Conquest in goals. Was the English side simply that good?

RL "This game proved to be a real 'feast' for the English with them winning by the massive score of 17-0. I believe it's every sportsman's ambition to represent their country, but this is one time I was pleased to be sitting on the sideline as a reserve and not playing. The only reason for me making that comment is that had I been in goal and had 17 scored against me I think much could have been made about my youth and relative inexperience. I might have been banished to Siberia or some such place and not got another game against them while they were here. Some goalkeepers seeing the goals stack up against them might have faked an injury to get out of the firing line that day but that could never be said of Norman Conquest. This day he stayed there and took the brunt of the English attack, which seemingly could do no wrong. I haven't got any newspaper reports of the game but from memory I can recall that we had had recent rain and the centre square cricket pitch area was like a bog. While no excuses can account for the 17-0 drubbing our players, as I remember could not stay on their feet in this area. The Englishmen on the other hand with their experience of wet and muddy conditions had no problems. Simplistic as it might sound I think it a possibility that the Englishmen finding out early in the game that our players were slow in running and turning in this area played the ball into the mud. With their superior speed and control they left our midfielders floundering and we would be caught thin in defence. Statistically England scored a goal every five minutes."

GS : When the Federation-Association split happened your representative career was put on hold because you were considered a 'banned' player. How did that feel?

RL Not too good actually but there was nothing we as players could do about it. The English club team Blackpool with Stanley Mathews in the side toured, as did Hearts of Midlothian. It would have been an experience to play against them but it was not to be.

GS : When the F.I.F.A. ban was finally lifted you were again first choice Australian goalkeeper for the 1964 series against Everton. Although into the later stage of your career that must have been a significant moment in your career.

RL "It was significant and I did feel quietly proud that I had first represented in 1950 and here it was 13 years later and I was still making the grade. My wife Kath likes to think she had something to do with it, because of the special way she always polished my football boots!"

GS : What was the Socceroo coaching like in the 1950's?

RL "What coaching? Sometimes yes and sometimes no. To be fair to those who did coach I would have to ask 'what chance would a coach have of success if he had his team together for a day or two only before a match'? I can remember playing in the mid 50's for Metropolis (Sydney) against South Africa at the Sydney Cricket Ground and I was introduced to a co-team member that I had never previously met before let alone played with. And to cap that one we didn't have a Coach, and the Team Manager's parting words to us just prior to running out on the field were "Go out there and do your best boys" I think it was a fairly significant that the one occasion when we were together for a week in camp we were successful as a team. That was in 1959 and the N.S.W team had a week together training in Camden with Leo Baumgartner as player coach. We played 3 games against Costa Rica who were returning home after a tour of Europe and we beat them in each game. 4-2 on Saturday and 7-1 on the Wednesday night with both games at the Sydney Sports Ground and the next Sunday we won 4-2 in Newcastle

GS : Do you remember your final representative match?

RL "It should have been in the second and final test against Everton at the Sydney Showground but a few days before the math I suffered a pinched nerve in the neck and had to withdraw from the team much to my dismay. Adauto Igesias replaced me in goal. So my last representative match was against Everton in the first test in Melbourne where they beat us 8-2. The story goes that Roy Vernon said before the match 'We'll score 8 goals today and show that we can really play the game'. And he was true to his word. The reason he said this was that the Everton players made no secret of the fact that they were not happy with the lack of attention they received in the Australian Rules mad Melbourne. They were one of the best club sides in the world at that time and they were used to being the centre of attention. Although I picked 8 out of the back of the net I got some encouragement from one report that said ' Two of the Australian players to come out of the match with any real credit were goalkeeper Ron Lord and right fullback Trevor Edwards. Lord showed courage and agility to get his team out of trouble with some splendid saves' "

GS . In those big games what was it like to be the goalkeeper?

RL "When you were playing against those visiting sides the goalkeeper was on a hiding to nothing. One of the things that made it more difficult was they (the visitors) were professionals and they trained during the day and they could kick a ball a yard faster than the local players that you were so used to playing against. If you had six weeks training against those players before you actually played in a match against them you'd have a much better chance of judging the speed of the ball. I found at times that this was a problem. When they made good contact with the ball it was so much faster through the air

GS : When you represented your country in soccer, did you get any financial reimbursement?

RL "It wasn't like it is today that's for sure. In 1950 when the Australian side went to South Africa they were paid three pounds and five shillings a week and that had to cover them for the whole tour. A lot of them came back dead stony broke no money or owing money. When I went to Melbourne for the (Olympic) games I didn't get paid from work and so I didn't have any income for those six weeks I was away. Any money people raised were from chook raffles."

***GS** . Back to your club career, your transfer from the Auburn association club to Prague was big news at the time. It also caused a little controversy due to your high profile. Can I ask you to explain how it all came about?*

RL "No that's fine At that time there was only one Australian born player playing with Prague that was Geoff Geddes and I had trepidation's about going but I spoke to Karol Rodny who was club president at the time and he spoke of a number of factors which I had to take into account. So I decided that I would go ahead and join them but firstly I wanted to get in touch with the Auburn club and let them know what my position was because Prague wanted me to play with them on the Saturday and this was Friday night Unfortunately I couldn't get in touch with Harry Greentree the Auburn Secretary and I finished up signing on the Saturday morning at Oscar Picks' delicatessen in the Haymarket Anyway played on the Saturday for Prague and we lost 2-1 to Auburn would you believe it was a very strange feeling to have left Auburn whom I'd been with for seven years"

***GS** : What were the player payments like back then?*

RL "I can recall not long after joining Prague we played a double header We played Auburn on the Saturday and it was Hakoah on the Sunday I got five pound on the Saturday and six-pound on the Sunday I thought eleven pounds this is unbelievable because when I played with Drummoyne one season we got two pound for the whole 1950 season So getting eleven pounds it was fantastic As we were coming out of the ground Kath (my wife, had Bryan our eldest son who would have been about eighteen months old in her arms and Stan Slavic who was our patron pulled out five pounds out of his pocket and he tucked it in between Bryans body and Kaths coat He said here is a present for your son. so it was eleven pounds plus five pounds In those times tradesmen got twelve pounds a week But you never got paid for travelling time and training so if you take what you got from playing as against what it cost you to go training it more than cuts it out But to be paid for playing football was fantastic

(Ron pulls out his unsigned 1956 contract.)

***GS** : Its a twelve month contract saying you will receive five pounds for a loss ten pound a draw fifteen pounds a win. Ten pounds salary monthly payable for each competition game. Five pound for each cup game in first grade played and three pounds for each trial game, first or second grade. It's unsigned.*

RL I didn't sign it because I didn't take it up I told them I didn't want to carry on "

***GS** : Did you get a slice of the transfer fee for signing with Prague?*
(Ron pulls out his contract signed with Prague in 1957)

"Mr R Lord has signed as a contracted player to play with the above club (Prague) under the following conditions - a signing on fee of two hundred pounds will be paid by the treasurer to Mr Lord upon signing the registration card. A weekly retainer of six pounds will be paid by Prague to Mr Lord throughout the season.

Mr Lord will receive the some premiums as any other player of Prague and is under insurance scheme providing a weekly compensation of fifteen pounds and medical expenses.

A special bonus of one hundred pounds will be paid to Mr Lord by the Prague cub upon the concussion of the season 1957

For his part Mr Lord promising faithfully to do his best for the Prague club both on the field and off the field and will obey all lawful directions which might be given to him by the responsible Prague club officers.

Both Mr Lord and the responsible offices of Prague will not divulge the contents of this contract to anyone - till me forty years later.

RL "I don't think any of them will worry about you seeing that (laughing)

***GS** : So that is the original contract you signed back then?*

RL "Yes When Karol Rodny (Pragues president) spoke to me at work about joining his club I mentioned my loyalty to Auburn and he said who would you be more loyal to You've got a small son and a wife Who should you be more loyal to, your wife and your son or Auburn soccer club? He hit the nail on the head because two hundred pound could do a lot for them "

***GS** : Towards the end of your career you were give a testimonial by the Prague club to acknowledge your service to the club and the game. It must have been a very satisfying point in your career.*

RL "I was honoured that the Prague committee would think enough of me to stage this testimonial tribute and I think it might have been the first for an active player It was held at the Sydney Athletic Field Pragues home ground on a Sunday the 16th of February 1964 There was an early game between a Sydney's referee team and a mid 55's Prague team My eldest son Brian (9 at the time) took part in a march past of junior players Before the late game my Wife Kath daughter Jennifer (6) and son John (2) and myself were driven around the ground in our president's open Chevrolet We then walked onto the field through a guard of honour consisting of Ice Hockey players to be met by representatives of the Referees Association, N S W Federation and Prague club committee members A presentation was made to me and I responded with a speech that was very emotional for me The late game was between the 1959 Prague championship winning team and the present Prague 1964 team The 1959 side won 3-2 (Ron was in goals) I have many photo's and fond memories of that day I'm sure I'll never forget and my thanks go out once again to those who worked and participated to make it a success "

***GS** : Did you do much junior development or coaching as a senior player?*

RL "Yeah I used to hold goalkeeping clinics A club would contact me and I'd do a clinic for them You wouldn't get paid for them, sometimes a club would give you expenses but I never asked for money Quite often I used to take one of the goalkeepers out that I was coaching at Western Suburbs or Bankstown Gary Maier was one and so was Greg Woodhouse I coached Greg from when he was fifteen years of age He went onto represent Australia Terry Eaton was at Western Suburbs and I believe Terry was one goalkeeper that should have played for Australia and didn't He was an excellent goalkeeper and didn't get a rep game There were a couple of good kids at Western Suburbs who played in the state juniors "

***GS** : This was after you finished as a player.*

RL "I was the manager of the Prague side in '66 but I gave that away There was too much interference from the committee I just made sure players attended training and organise things The following season I was approached by Bankstown Soccer Club to see if I would specialise in their goalkeeping coaching So I was there for a couple of seasons and I was approached by Western Suburbs soccer club to coach their goalkeepers so I went with them Western Suburbs eventually amalgamated with A P I A so I stayed on with A P I A and I stayed coaching their keepers until 1978 I had a two-year break and then I came down to the Illawarra Its much better coaching goalkeepers as you don't get interference from the committee as long as your goalkeepers are performing and I never had a problem getting them to perform well Just put them through the basics and make sure they have regular training Its all hands-on with me I'd say have three or four goalkeepers and I would rotate them through the various movements that I wanted so I was on the go at the time whereas they were rotating and getting a rest between drills I was fit as a fiddle and felt like I could have been playing."

GS : As goalkeeper you faced all of the great forwards of the 50's. Do any stand out in your mind? Artie Quill for example.

RL "Artie Quill was a very good player He had all the skills"

GS : As good as Reg Date?

RL "No Reg Date was the best without a shadow of a doubt Tremendous kick and he could head a ball well too The ball didn't have to be on the ground for him to score He'd pull it down and knew exactly where the goals were He was terrific with either foot I remember playing against Reg Date and I was a fullback (before switching to goalkeeper) and we were playing up on Blick Oval at Canterbury We two fullbacks were up on the halfway line and the opposition put through a long ball looking for the centre forward I started running back and next minute I heard these footsteps behind me and he went past me like I was standing still He was very quick in those days"

GS : Any other names?

RL "Frank Parsons Frank was tall and he could head a ball and he had a very strong left foot Another player who was difficult to play against, not that he had a great technique but Jackie Drinkwater from Cessnock would run through a brick wall to get to the ball Because I place Reg Date on such a big pedestal I find it hard to recall other players to come up anywhere near him A player who one of the best kickers of the deadball was Johnny Giacometti who played with Leichhardt-Annandale (and later A.P.I.A.) You could form a wall up against him and he had the ability to run onto a ball and kick it with a lot of top spin So it would get above the wall and dip quickly and drop I can remember out at the Marks Field (Sydney Athletic Field) one night a free kick was taken outside the penalty area level with one post So I set my wall up and put it to cover the far post and I would cover the near post knowing how hard he kicks it I thought if I force him to go for the inside of the far post there's every chance he'll put it outside the post Well it was night and balls tend to move in the air a lot at night, but he hit that ball and cleared the wall and it just dropped straight under the cross bar I just couldn't believe this shot and I'd seen him do that a couple of times since"

Rons outstanding career came to a close in 1966 as a player After receiving numerous honours as a goalkeeper he became a specialist goalkeeping coach with clubs like Western Suburbs, Bankstown and A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt before finally retiring altogether Ron these days is happy in his retirement where his sport of choice is golf With wife Kath they still keep in close touch with some of the many friends that the great game has given them As we carried away with the brilliance of todays goalkeepers we should think of the many who have gone before them and worn the green and gold number one shirt with pride - none better than our Olympic goalkeeper Ron Lord

If any of our readers have a father, mother sister, brother, next door neighbor work-mate, etc who has pulled on the "Green and Gold" you may be able to help us expand our ever-growing list of interviews Even if you know someone at the local pub always sprouting off about his "pinpoint pass to Parsons in New Zealand", drop us a line. We'll send our intrepid reporter Greg Stock in search of a chat about old times, over a nice hot cuppa (or something stronger!!!!)

You can write to us here at S.U. or e-mail Greg direct at sunny@spin.net.au.

All correspondance will be answered as soon as the replay finishes!!!!!!!

in Melbourne?

are almost certain to see last season's grand finalists still in there with a (Carlton) assess why both clubs are likely to feature at the final hurdle

Carlton (with 2nd opinion provided by Mark Jaworsky)

Carlton play a 4-4-2 formation Without the ball players retreat looking to win the ball just in front of the penalty area Fast players (Bresciano) are given licence to hunt down the ball carrier and in fact have been more effective than the likes of Marth in winning the ball When the ball has been won, the play is to pass to the strikers going wide who then play in the wide midfielders coming up for support (Refer Spirit and Olympic games at home) Get it up front fast

We sometimes vary the placement of players, with Colosimo moving up from sweeper and Marth going backwards when we need to counter attack Edi K sometimes plays 3 at the back with a sweeper in front/behind, a lone fullback out wide and zonal marking Sean Douglas is ever present this season and has surprised more than a few with his excellent performances at the back over the last season and bit Lubo Lapansky has been solid if a little inconsistent over the last few games Marth, frankly, has been a major disappointment this season as he and Lapansky have not gone on from their Somers st days

Marth is extremely aggressive in an aggressive team but has failed to find form, which has led to greater frustration and indiscipline It is thought opposing teams have noticed this and are going after Marth to unsettle him As an experienced pro, he should know better Training part time in a full time environment could lead to lower fitness and jealousy Vlahos and Tricarico seem to have a loose screw therabouts Vlahos inexplicably losing all form after being dropped whilst Tricarico was fined after costing us the game against Spirit

Carlton's bench strength has already been tested with the prolonged absence of Anthopolous, Grella, Atkinson and Colosimo missing signficant parts of the season We are 4th as I write this indicating team officials have overcome form and fitness worries Colosimo and Bresciano (Tricarico?) will miss games in April for the WYC

Goalkeeper defence and midfield Cagalj, Anastasiadis, Cervinski, Douglas, Stergiopolous, Anthopolous, Colosimo, Atkinson, Marth Lapansky Vlahos and Bresciano is probably the strongest and deepest in the league It's upfront where we have major problems Although scoring 11 goals in the first 13 rounds, neither Moreira and Tricarico have overly impressed both squandering plenty of chances and failing to strike up a partnership Moreira hangs onto the ball for too long, Tricarico keeps getting caught offside, Josifovski is not ready yet and as for Vlahos Edi K is undecided over Vlahos and Markovac on the flank, and I suspect he doesn't know which is the first choice defence Colosimo scored a hatrick on the opening day but I have grave doubts over his presence in a 442 formation as sweeper Most sweepers in a 442 are defensive (Baresi Horvat)

I feel Carlton need an early goal to win the game Failing to score that goal in the first 60 minutes brings in pressure and we try too hard to score instead of letting it happen Are Carlton likely to win the league? We were nicely placed after an early crisis, but a mid-season stumble has seen us go down a bit Our last 3 games at home - Hellarse, Marconi and Glory will see exactly what role we'll have in the finals. A big name, experienced striker along the lines of Newcastle's Yoon, will be a major help in winning the GF In that absence it is unlikely Much depends upon the mentality of Moreira in the autumn

True Stories Dept. presents...

1967 - TOUR OF DUTY.

The story of the '67 Socceroos tour to Vietnam and how they won Australia's first international soccer tournament

Younger Aussie soccer fans so used to seeing our representative sides jetting to all points of the compass, would find Australia's soccer isolation in the early 1960's unimaginable. No World Cup, no NSL, Olyroos, Socceroos, Joeys and certainly no Matildas. Soccer three decades ago was strictly amateur and local, with thirty seconds of grainy, black-and -white FA Cup final film every May to liven proceedings.

Australia's football outlook mirrored its position in the Commonwealth. Imitating cricket and rugby, regular five or six 'test' series were played against New Zealand, Canada, India, South Africa and Rhodesia. In fact, notwithstanding Australia's involvement in the 1956 Olympics, our first opponents in a full international outside this Commonwealth Super League was North Korea in the 1965 World Cup qualifiers.

The ASF' formation in the early 1960's and Australia's readmission into FIFA in 1963 was the catalyst for breaking out of this isolation. Australia entered the World Cup for the very first time and after a spate of African and Asian withdrawals, found itself facing only North Korea for a place in the finals in England.

Coach Tiko Jelisavcic took his Aussie squad to humid Phnom Penh in Cambodia to face the unknown north Koreans for both legs. Australia didn't have any diplomatic relations with the communist North Koreans so it was agreed to play both home and away matches in neutral Cambodia.

An acclimatisation training camp in Queensland was hardly preparation for the games, and the Aussies crashed to 6-1 and 3-1 defeats. The quick and skilful Koreans were unlike anything the Aussies had ever seen. Returning home to face some serious soul-searching and criticism, some media pundits suggested that if Australia was to be humiliated like that in the World Cup perhaps it would be better if we didn't compete again.

Media hysterics aside, what the twin defeats really highlighted was Australia's lack of experience of Asian football. If we were to have any hope of qualifying for the 1970 finals in Mexico, Australia needed a crash course in Asian soccer. Yet well into 1967, the ASF had yet to formulate a strategy (sound familiar?) to harness the raw talent in Australia into a side capable of qualifying for the 1970 World Cup.

Preparations were amateurish and ad hoc. The Australian side was cobbled together each year to play a visiting team and would then disperse for another year. Jo Vengios took control of the side for a three match series against the Scots in 1967 but decided to return to Europe immediately after the series.

Whether by luck or design, the ASF turned to Joe Vlasits. Joe had emigrated from Hungary in 1949 where he had been a national team selector and youth team coach. In NSW, he coached Prague and Canterbury, gaining a reputation for giving young talent a chance. In the late 1970's he was instrumental in establishing the NSW Coaches Federation and state youth squad.

His impact on the Socceroo squad was immediate, giving youngsters like Schaefer, Richards, Vojtek, Corry, Alston, Reilly, Wilson and Mackay their international debuts, players who would form the backbone of Australia's side well into the 1970's.

Vlasits and the ASF soon realised that to qualify for Mexico '70 it needed to develop some experience of Asian footy, its style, climate and conditions. In the midst of war, Australia entered the 1967 National Day tournament in Saigon along with South Vietnam, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong, Thailand and Malaysia in two four-team groups.

Several miles from a war-zone is a pretty strange place to send an international football team but the ASF's desire for Asian competition was matched by the Australian government's determination to win the hearts and minds of the South Vietnamese. The federal government saw the tournament as a great publicity coup and helped fund the Socceroo campaign.

Landing in 'Nam, the squad wasn't allowed to forget the far greater battle occurring just up the road. The Socceroos were briefed by US security men and advised to steer well clear of Americans because they were frequent VietCong targets. Stones and bricks lying on the road, they were warned, shouldn't be kicked because they may be bombs. Their hotel was guarded day and night but that didn't stop the VC from trying to blow it up. Window shutters on buses ferrying the team around Saigon were bolted shut while soldiers combed the pitch (which was surrounded by a seven-foot fence) with mine detectors.

The players (who were each insured for $17 000) slept three in a room. An electric shock threw skipper Stan Ackerley across the room when he tried to turn on the lights and the food was so bad that the players preferred to be fed by the Australian Army rather than take their chances with the local cuisine! The squad itself was captained by the tough-tackling, ex-Manchester United youth player Stan Ackerley and combined the experience of Micic and Westwater with the youthful promise of Abonyi, Warren, Corry and Vojtek.

On November 5, to a background of artillery, Australia kicked off its tournament against the Kiwis by racing to a two-goal lead through Baartz and Warren. Torrential rain had turned the pitch into a paddock and with the help of the Aussie defence, the Kiwis had equalised by half-time. Centre-back Frank Micic, in particular, had struggled in the slush and was replaced by debutante Manfred Schaefer at half-time. Schaefer certainly took his chance, making the position his own for the next decade. The Aussies re-organized at the break and Abonyi ran amok, scoring a second-half hat-trick to lead Australia to a 5-3 win.

Two days later, an Allan Westwater pass allowed Johnny Warren to score the only goal of the game against the South Vietnamese in the 35th minute. The home side, quick and skilful but unable to compete physically against the Aussies, was rarely a threat after Australia scored. Warren in particular worked himself to exhaustion during the game, collapsing from fatigue the next day.

Having guaranteed their place in the last four, the Aussies strolled to a 5-1 win over Singapore. Westwater opened the scoring and Baartz completed it but Abonyi's hat-trick in between was the highlight.

Astonishingly, the semi-final against Malaysia was scheduled to take place the next day. A bad foul on Tommy McColl led to a mass brawl that involved most of the players and led to the police and military rushing onto the pitch to break it up. Australia, hitting the woodwork twice, controlled possession but couldn't beat a stubborn Malaysian defence. In the 117th minute, Malaysian resistance was finally broken, when Ray Baartz powerfully smashed a Vojtek pass into the net for the winner.

In the final, in front of 30 000, South Korea stunned the Aussies by scoring almost directly from the kick-off. Vojtek hit the post and McColl missed an open goal but it was Ron Corry's fine goalkeeping that kept Australia going in the face of a counter-attacking South Korea that dominated possession for long periods. Billy Vojtek, a star in the final with his speed and dribbling ability, equalised and with the Aussies getting on top as the half was ending nearly scored again through Warren and Vojtek. Abonyi scored in the 52nd minute to confirm.

Australia's dominance and soon after the South Koreans were reduced to ten men. Abonyi's goal, from a Van Alphen free-kick, made it 3-1 and effectively killed the game as a contest. A late Korean goal was just a consolation that couldn't stop Australia winning its first international tournament.

Oblivious to the sounds of war barely twenty miles away, the Aussies celebrated with great jubilation and well into the night. One Aussie journalist, Terry Smith (obviously caught up in the excitement of the win) claimed "this was the magical moment of soccer glory that I had been waiting for... ...a moment when Australia had at last become a proud force by winning a prestige international event"

Perhaps prestigious is a little over-dramatic but the win certainly helped ease the pain of 1965 and gave Aussie good reason to look forward to the 1970 World Cup qualifiers with justifiable confidence.

Not that the tour was over. Australia played, and won, a further five games the highlight of which was a four-goal burst in fifteen minutes against Singapore. The poor conditions and length of the tour allowed a camaraderie and spirit to develop that hadn't previously existed in the Australian team. Visits had molded a side that was fit enough to withstand humid conditions, was well organized, skilful, tight defensively, yet with enough pace and power to score loads of goals.

The heroes of the squad were too many to mention but honorable mention's go to Allan Westwater who starred in midfield, Atti Abonyi who scored 13 goals in nine games, Billy Vojtek for his skilful wing-play and the consistent Stan Ackerley who played in all ten tour games. It was also the first truly national side. The Coaches Federation looked at talent all over the country, not just the south coast, allowing South Australians Roger Romanowicz and Tommy McColl to gain national selection.

The success of the tour also generated interest back home. Fans greeted the Socceroos at Sydney airport while the Melbourne City Council held a civic reception for the five Victorians in the squad. Two years after our first rude introduction to Asian football, Australia had arrived as a creditable power. Although Australia failed to qualify for Mexico '70 (by one tragic own goal) this tour helped sew the seeds of qualification in 1973. Five of the 1967 winning squad eventually were to play in a far more significant win over South Korea in 1973, but that's another story.

Results

V New Zealand	5-3	Abonyi 3, Warren, Baartz
v South Vietnam	1-0	Warren
v Singapore	5-1	Abonyi 3, Westwater, Baartz
v Malaysia (s/f)	1-0	Baartz
v South Korea (final)	3-2	Abonyi 2, Vojtek

Other tour results.

v Indonesia	2-0	Abonyi, Baartz
v Indonesia	3-1	Vojtek 2, own-goal
v Singapore	6-1	Abonyi 2, Westwater, Vojtek, Mooc, McColl
v Combined Services	5-1	Abonyi 2, Vojtek 2, Schaffer, Westwater, McColl, Richards
(Singepore)		
v Malaysia	4-0	Vojtek 2, McColl, Abonyi

Sources: "The Socceroos and their Opponents.", L.Schwab, 1979
"Encyclopedia of Australian Soccer, 1922-88.", GE Olivier-Scerri, 1988
Jack Pollard's "Soccer Records.", 1974

So, What's changed in 30 years? . .. Anthony Ferguson recently spent a few weeks in Vietnam and returns with the inside on:

SOCCER IN VIETNAM TODAY

Hi footy fans. I recently spent a few weeks in Vietnam, so thought I'd provide an outline on how the round-ball code stands in that particular Asian country.

Firstly, soccer is the biggest sport in Vietnam and it enjoys huge public support and popularity. Conversely however, Vietnam is still pretty much a poor nation, and consequently the infrastructure isn't there as yet to support an internationally comparative and competitive national competition or national team.

The Vietnamese Championship is run along similar lines to our own NSL. It consists of 12 teams spread all over the country, from Ho Chi Minh City Police and Sai Gon Port in the south to Hanoi Police and Hai Phong Police in the north. As you can imagine, police teams are pretty popular in this socialist nation. While I was there, I occasionally caught glimpses of a local competition called the Police Cup on television. The matches were well attended in huge stadiums with Spartan conditions, and the standard ... well, let's just say that even the Canberra Cosmos could get a result against these sides. If I remember correctly, the Police Cup Final in 1998 was contested between the Hai Phong Police and Ho Chi Minh City Police.

To the best of my knowledge the national league has been operating since 1981 and the Army Club of Cau Lac Bo Quan Doi are the most successful side, having taken out the title in 1982, 83 and 97.

Internationally, Vietnam is one of the poorer outfits in Asia. They finished a distant last in their 1998 World Cup qualifying group behind China, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. They are regular entrants in the popular regional Tiger Cup competition, but are not quite able to match it with the likes of Thailand and Malaysia. They are a damn sight better than neighbouring Laos though, as they hammered them 7-0 in a friendly while I was in the country.

The latest FIFA world rankings in December 1998 lists Vietnam in 98th position, two lower than the previous month, but six places higher than they were in December 1997. In comparison, the Socceroos are currently 39th in the FIFA rankings. The national side plays in a spiffy all red kit with two wide vertical yellow stripes running up the side and under both arms, sort of like Melchester Rovers circa 1984. I bought myself a national team shirt for US$4 in a street market.

The television coverage afforded to the locals is enough to whet the appetite of any Oz traveller. For some unknown reason, every Vietnamese with a TV has access to an average of two live English Premier League games a week, plus live Serie A from Italy, live Primera Liga from Spain, the Asian soccer Show (covering the entire region) as well as the local league.

My guess is that the government uses television coverage as a form of social control. Most Vietnamese are poor, too poor to be able to afford overseas travel. Perhaps they are able to substitute their wanderlust by seeing the rest of the world via a TV screen. Everyone in Vietnam has a huge colour television. When driving through the tiniest villages in the evenings past ramshackle grass or wood huts I could see through the windows or cracks in the wall the glow of a large colour television screen. I can only imagine that televisions must be incredibly cheap to buy for the locals.

(.continued on page 25)

Dear Studs Up.....

PO Box 53, Oakleigh South

We open on a sad note this month, as Ashley Hynes wrestles with the priorities of Soccer Australia.

In early December 1998 Tony Burgo (a committee member at Earlwood Wanderers Football Club) called me at work. Tony needed help to get some bits and pieces together for the benefit night the club was arranging for Con Antoniadis, a youngster diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer. Part of Tony's appeal was to get some guest auctioneers from Sydney Olympic. They are a friendly club and this was quickly arranged.

Tony got back to me and said that he was also looking for an Australian national jersey and if possible, signed by the current squad. However in regards to this he had had a few problems from Soccer Australia's publicity department, which in this case went by the name of a person I shall refer to as Person X.

Evidently Tony had been promised a return call from Soccer Australia. At that stage it was still possible to get a signed jersey organized in time for the Chinese international being played that week in Wollongong. Unfortunately, after the match Tony had still not heard back from Soccer Australia.

Since I am the publicity officer for the Canterbury and District Soccer Association, Tony asked if I could perhaps convince the national body. After a day of leaving messages on X's wonderful message bank I eventually caught up with him. Sheer persistence is a wonderful thing.

"Hi (I told him who I was). There is a young boy over in Earlwood who is ill with cancer and Tony one of the club members, has asked you to help him in this benefit night that the club is organizing. Tony did tell me that he has asked you for a national jersey"

He replied: "Look (sound of chuckling) *we have no national jerseys left. Adidas are thinking of changing the design. We don't provide that sort of service. I mean if I had to provide a jersey for every young kid . .. (etc)"*

It would be dumb and dangerous to say that X is bad for Australian soccer but I do feel that X represents what seems to be a tragic dislocation between the much-cliched grass roots and our national association. My short involvement with district soccer hasn't been all that crash hot. So far I have seen all manner of short sightedness from clubs who are paid up but totally indifferent members of District associations.

Indeed the very fabric of soccer development in this country is frayed by and large. However when it comes to a club like Earlwood there is no questions in my mind. At District committee meetings their head honchos are familiar because of their regular attendance and succeed in providing a decent club for their area.

Indeed so impressive is their contribution to grass roots soccer in the inner West that as Tony Burgo pointed out, their benefaction to the Soccer Australia coffers goes back over 20 years and amounts in total to many thousands of dollars demanded through subscription. The actual total is impossible to calculate. Infrastructure has a way of creating more and more cash but when all is said and done I hazard to guess that Earlwood have contributed somewhat more than the $20 or so that a national jersey costs Soccer Australia.

In the end the 1974 heroes came to our rescue again. Ernie Campbell at 3D Masterpants and Ray Richards at Fairfield's Sports Factory put me through to Miriam at Fairfield-Marconi and Tony Labozetta was able to find one of the shirts and before the day was over Miriam was phoning asking if I wanted the shirt delivered and Les Scheinflug's signature on it. I have no idea what services Soccer Australia believe they are offering as a salaried employee of us all in the game. More than this I have no understanding as to what contribution they have made to the game in this country. Perhaps the game is dependent on the sterling work they do. But in terms of public relations they aren't quite hitting the mark.

I would even go as far to say that as a representative of the game nationally they should very carefully consider what their job entails and what responsibilities they owe to the memory of Con Antoniadis and a district club like Earlwood Wanderers in Sydney's inner West.

Dear Studs Up (2)

***Peter Saviano* can't quite agree with the Craig Wilson over the Northern Spirit venture....**

Dear SU

I believe Craig Wilson's letter (SU34) concerning the ethnicity (if there is such a word!) surrounding the Northern Spirit club is worthy of [redacted].

To an uninformed reader it would suggest that Sydney is a city of ethnic ghettos - North Shore predominantly Anglo-Saxon, presumably some Western suburbs (i.e. Fairfield) Italian with others of various Balkan countries descent while the Eastern suburbs (i.e. Canterbury) mostly Greek.

Perhaps the view expressed is that our other major cities have similar distributions of ethnic groups! Looking through the team lists of Northern Spirit's recent matches, it could hardly be said that all their players have Anglo-Saxon origins. The same is revealed if perusing the line-ups of our other national league clubs.

To me the real point is that without any racial inclination, it is a fact the great majority of the Australian population is still made up of people who are of Anglo-Saxon descent. Therefore it is a sound judgement that Northern Spirit have 'bitten the bullet' to foster a previously untapped market.

It is therefore imperative that they succeed in the venture if our game is to become universally accepted by the sporting public of our largest city.

SOCCER IN VIETNAM TODAY

(continued from page 23)

The popularity of the game in Vietnam is emphasised by the numbers of kids playing soccer in the street. For those who can't afford to buy a ball there is an interesting alternative; a game called Cau Tuyen (magic shuttle). Young Vietnamese males can be seen playing this game in the street all over the country. Cau Tuyen basically entails a small group standing in a circle kicking a shuttlecock with a small spring in the end around like a soccer ball, with the aim of keeping it off the ground.

One wonders why they don't just use a plastic ball but nevertheless it is a game of great skill. The lithe locals use feet, chest, head, shoulders and knees to keep the shuttle in the air. My colleague and I joined in a number of games, being soccer players ourselves, but were not quite as flexible as the locals. Other clumsy Australians were also seen joining in occasionally using their hands, which is a hell of a lot easier and perhaps defeats the purpose of the [redacted].

Another indication of the widespread popularity of soccer in Vietnam is the sheer propensity of foreign football shirts on sale in the many streetside shops and markets. They generally range in price from US$2-4 although I'm not too sure about the quality and authenticity of the product. For example I didn't know Man Utd had a green strip, or that Juventus had a yellow shirt with black hoops, and why are the badges on the right hand side - hang on these aren't real!

Well, that's my summation of the status of the world game in Vietnam. Plenty of enthusiasm and promise. A huge, fit population of some 78 million. All they lack is some capital investment in facilities and diet and they could make a mark on the game in the region. It is worth considering the Vietnamese fanaticism for the game. Some readers may recall the bizarre deliberate own goal fiasco a couple of months back in a regional competition match between two Asian nations, where both sides tried to lose by scoring own goals. Well they were doing that to avoid having to play host nation Vietnam in the following game, in front of 70,000 hostile locals in the national stadium.

Vietnamese soccer: it's an explosion waiting to happen.

Dear SU, (sort of.....)

I have witnessed a lot of malarky in my time but none worse than that which soccer Australia showed to the recent Christchurch soccer tournament in which the United States beat everyone up, just as Bill Clinton was beating up on Iraq I have included a report about the tournament and am presently in New Zealand visiting my girlfriend I am sending this to you in order that you might use it for the fanzine, and hopefully, it will help you
Yours Sincerely,
Ashley Hyne

The Christchurch International U16s Tournament.

The conclusions to be drawn from the recent Christchurch International under 16s tournament are two One good and one bad

The bad is in the lack of vision of the organisers and prospective opponents, namely Australia. The tournament staged toward that envelope dreaded by parents everywhere, the Christmas break, was poorly supported by the local press and as such the attendances weren't up to much despite the fact that school children were admitted free of charge Surely a flier distributed to all the major schools in the area would have produced a greater response The inept, naive attitude posed by the local press (What no rugby?) rendered the international significance of the tournament meaningless. That said the devotees couldn't get enough of it

Lack of foresight is also a term which could be applied to the Australians who deliberated on the issue as to whether to send someone along and eventually deferred, Another fit of pique After the shambles in San Jose and Brisbane the last thing Soccer Australia should be doing is sticking their heads in the sand The HSCs have finished and the youngsters in the throws of their long hot close season can only be killing time for the next wee while.

Some phenomenal performances from what after all are school kids on their first foreign assignment put all the rubbish into the background The basic premise of school kids maintaining technical discipline (or discipline of any kind) through out the week was one of the more astonishing parts of the competition

The Americans raced away with it. Solid and professional, (they cost more than the All Blacks), belying the fact that the players haven't even developed arm pit hair, they brushed aside opponents. They are clearly in dire need of something far stronger to test their mettle 25 goals to the good, a goal conceded and the golden boot to Gregorio The Americans nearly nicked the silverware too but the organisers weren't game

Their reliance on a defensive wing back DeMarcus Beasley on the right as well as the wing play of Gregorio on the left produced all manner of delights They managed to brush off opponents by doing the right things correctly Beating players, having the self belief to pass the ball effectively in the last third of the field, having a midfield that supported attacks should the ball fall loose from the attackers, and also having a resolute defence, and an ability to rough it should the need be there

At 15 Nelson Akwari is the greatest central defender I have ever seen. He is slight but his reading of the through ball was enough to guarantee standing applause. And not a boot to the side line either He never put a foot wrong, offering perfect placement of the ball on to the foot of a player better positioned than himself so that defence could immediately and devastatingly become attack

They gave a solid, if sometimes illegal, display in front of a Saturday crowd against their hosts However, technical discipline and a lack of discipline seemed to go hand in hand at various points. Technical maturity is one thing but now and again there were moments when the juggernaut of televised misdemeanours showed itself to be well learnt and practiced and it is in everyone's favour that at this level the coaches recognise their job to coach cleanly

The South Africans proved themselves confident ball players although their determination to dwell too long on the ball is their great undoing. They seem to possess the tools for victory and defeat in their selves and it is going to take a hard coach to knock it out of them Natural dribblers one moment, losing possession the next They exhibited an unquenchable team spirit, witnessed in their late, improbable victory over the Koreans (the entire squad sprinting to converge on the goal scorer) as well as the searching (but ultimately futile examination) of the Americans after their central defender was ordered off

The Koreans were purposeful and were unfortunate to lose it at the death against the Americans when their leading scorer, well versed in international hand gestures stuffed the ref's armpit after his second yellow The Kiwis pointless, predictable but a tough nut all the same the only side to hold the Americans scoreless

My own particular highlight was watching the Tahitians. Three games in and win-less but giving as good as they got against the Kiwis in the second half and good value for a draw that didn't One game before and they had been headless chickens Now they showed great consideration, midfielders charging into position, hungry to support their darting forwards

How much value can be garnered from such a tournament? The potential price is the colour of the dye after the wash, but Christchurch have got the right idea funding an inexpensive but ultimately worthwhile venture into the mars of the future. Let us just hope that Soccer Australia don't miss the boat on this one

AUSSIES IN GERMANY- from Andre Kruger

At the moment German soccer is enjoying the winter break So the Aussies can go home for holidays or play for their clubs at the Indoor Soccer tournaments or go looking for new clubs So, if look back at the first half of the season there are only a few snippets of news but I have to talk again about Zdrilic the most successful Australian at the moment in Germany

First to the 1 Bundesliga Ned Zelic played all 17 games of the first round and with 68 games at all, he is close to get the first Australian Socceroo the reach the 100 mark Paul Agostino played only two games as a substitute at the beginning of the season and, I have to say again) it's a shame for a talented player like him There are some rumours that he wants to look for a new club and if he moves, am sure Germany will lose him Joe Simunic is still with Hamburg but he did not play a single match He has more injury problems to recover from than anybody had previously thought

The second League is also not an easy place Frank Juric is still Number one in Duesseldorf and he had some great games A few weeks ago I wanted to interview him but he was talking something about "for how much money?" so that's it. The luck was not on the side of Tony Sekulic, he played only one game maybe his time will come Robert Middleby's days are over in Jerdingen After a few bad games not only from him also from the whole Team the KFC was in last place and the coach kicked a few players out of the squad So Robby can have training with the team, but that's all

The so called "star" of the season from all Australian's is David Zdrilic SSV Ulm his club, is new in the second division and they have topped the table since the first day of the season A little sensation, for everyone in Germany And everyone has also some eyes on that team so if David can play on like the first half of the season he has a good chance to find a club at higher level The Croatian born Zdrilic, together with his forward partner Serbia born Dragan Trkulja are the dangerous forwards in this League Zdrilic scored 8 times, Trkulja 13 and no one can stop them

The call it the "Dream - Duo from the Donau" (the Donau is a river in Ulm) But David is only on loan from Switzerland's FC Aarau and Ulm wants to do everything not to lose him at the end of this season. Everyone wants to see if the little Club can stay at the top and maybe reach the 1 Division. But that's also a question of money so Ulm lost his excellent young coach to the VFB Stuttgart, but he finished first this saison with the SSV Ulm is a bit afraid that the coach is going than with a few players to his new club, maybe also with David

Worlds Worst (semi-pro) Soccer Clubs Part 2 of our occasional series

(Not) A season to remember

Featuring **Belmont City (1981)** From Anthony Ferguson

The first senior side I ever played for at the age of 18 turned out to be rather crap Belmont City was a long-standing side in the WA State Leagues If memory serves me correctly they even reached the upper echelons around the late 1960s By 1981 they had dropped to Division 4, the bottom grade but at season's start there was great optimism at the club A squad filled with youth and experience was player/coached by one Darrel O'Reilly a tall centre-back who according to himself was on the books of Leeds Utd during their glory days of the late 60s early 70s as understudy to big Jack Charlton.

The season even started on a bright note to lead us all into a false sense of security We hammered St Marks 4 0 But it was pretty much all downhill from there I can't quite put my finger on what went wrong, injuries players cracking the shits and leaving, bad selection policies, a playing strip that fell apart as we wore it Whatever from the second game on where a 2 0 half time lead turned into a 2 3 defeat the team just disintegrated

Our next win didn't come until well into the second half of the season and in the end we actually won 3 games out of 22 But in between there were some terrible results 0-5 home and away to the eventual champions, Victoria Park Viola 1 8 at Nedlands City (who we actually beat in the return match) and an abysmal 1 14 defeat at the hands of Whitfords City

It was only the efforts of the infamous Swan Valley side that kept us from being the joke of the entire League Therein lies a tale and another sure candidate for this segment. By 1981 Swan Valley had gone about five years without winning a game! They even made the sporting pages of the West Australian newspaper after our visit to their ramshackle ground in mid season for what would surely be a much needed points boost for us

You guessed it, they duffed us 3 1 I experienced the feeling of humility at an early age. It was somewhat akin to how a Premier League player would feel after being knocked out of the FA Cup 3rd Round by a Beazer Homes League side I imagine What a bloody nightmare They still finished last though Although we couldn't even beat them in the return (a 2-2 draw)

The following year Belmont City folded after a dismal turnout in pre-season training For the record, here are our stats for that forgettable season

P 22 W 3 D 4 L 15 F 27 A 71 Pts 10

Position: 11th out of 12 (Anyone got those Swan Valley stats?)

Remember if you've ever been associated with a truly crap team, we here at Studs Up would love to hear from you And you know SU will treat all requests for anonymity equally upon application!!!!!!!!

PROSPECTS FOR SUPER LEAGUE SUCCESS IN 1999

With clubs not deciding on their final squads until the end of January it was too early to know more than a smattering of news about each club before the current deadline, but more detail will be available for the next issue

BANKSTOWN CITY

Trial games planned for 3 p m on Sundays during January will sort the men from the boys at this Jensen Park club where Bosnian-born coach Sakib Lovic will attempt to steer the former title winners of 1994 and Grand Final winners of 93 and 94 to renewed success He may do better than many anticipate

There has been a very healthy turnout at trials and Lovic has brought in fellow Bosnian Saifet Catovic a clever player with numerous clubs to his name in NSW soccer already as his assistant and a member of the squad He also has again got veteran Mile Todorovski to patrol the midfield with his customary assurance, plus a few ex Auburn players like Nabil Codmani

The club is also seriously looking at developments at its established ground in Sefton, after clearing many of its debts from last season, which was a low point for this club in recent seasons

BLACKTOWN CITY

Alex Robertson is again in charge and the club will provide another good season for supporters who rejoiced at winning the Grand Final last year after another solid season as runners-up They have picked up some players from 1st Division Warringah Dolphins and are bound to be competitive

BONNYRIGG WHITE EAGLES

How can John Turner top last year's achievement? By winning the double of course and that is what this sponsor/coach will be aiming for in his fourth season in charge at the Serbian Centre

CANTERBURY MARRICKVILLE

Known affectionately by all of their loyal Greek supporters as Marrickville Olympic despite the best efforts over more than three decades to have the Canterbury name accepted in the wider community Prodigals Zoran Ilac and Bryan Rebury were exiled by their coach two years ago, but the big hearted John Xipolitas has forgiven them and the talented duo will line up with Berries again this term They join Marconi signing John Talcevski and St George defender Adrian Molachino in the strong Henson Park outfit John Xipolitas always has his sides firing early and the stalwarts are likely to be back again to see the Berries continue where they left off last year as semi-finalists The addition of tough nut Jason Wells recruited from Hurstville will certainly add punch to the midfield

CENTRAL COAST

Not much known about the Coasties at this stage but the ground is not available until well into the season due to returfing Allan Bourke will coach again and has been delighted with the turn out at trials He has coaxed back former skipper and key defender Mark Drysdale who has NSL experience and has brought in one time Australian Under 20 goalkeeper Steve Angelov from Illawarra Joins to work with Gary Meier who will again don the gloves when necessary for the Coasties. The speedy Peter Preston has remained sobd and while Shane Knight has left for Macarthur Bourke has recruited Jai McDermott an attacking player from Sutherland, who hails originally from Newcastle Nathan Bym returns for his fourth year in the red, white and blue and will be a big asset

EASTERN SUBURBS:

Cash-strapped Easts are putting most of their energies into establishing a new long term home at Hensley Athletic Field, for once deep in the heart of their territory. New coach John Calleja was Under 18 coach at Sydney Cosmos a couple of seasons back and is keen to establish a reputation as a first grade coach at the club which will be tenants at Wentworth Park only until April.

Though they are resigned to losing keeper Les Bihan they have an able deputy in Adam Mark and the losses of strikers such as Scott Mutton and Jason Bennett are compensated by the return of the jovial Steve Lawrenson. Another player to trial well was prolific scorer for Auburn and Granville Green Island, Unal Ogmen, who looked at ease in the colours of a club which happily is near his home. The Wanderers will operate on a reduced budget this coming season, but should be a hard nut to crack all the same.

FAIRFIELD BULLS:

New coach Joe Watson has had a lot of players trialling at Nineven Field and has been given the task of getting the Bulls away to a good first season after gaining promotion under Marshall Soper last term. Watson has lured the versatile George Zabelakis away from Hurstville City Minotaurs in one of the major moves of the off-season. The Bulls supporters are demanding and he has a big task ahead of him, with a respectable 30 points, but only 5 places off the bottom.

LEICHHARDT TIGERS:

Arno Bertogna is again going to try to tame these Tigers who are overdue for some success. Last year they faded after a bright start to finish with a respectable 30 points, but only 5 places off the bottom.

MACARTHUR RAMS:

Casey de Bruin is going to build on some solid late season performances by the Rams, the team he inherited at the start of last season. To run 3rd was a huge achievement and he will do well to top that, but he is a vastly experienced coach and has a knack of bringing out the best in young players. This could be another good year for the out-of-towners.

PARRAMATTA EAGLES:

Giants of the Super League and former Ericsson Cup competitors the Eagles need a big injection of some magic ingredient to return to their glory days.
Roberto Viera has the team this year and his aim is to improve dramatically on last season's 6th place. It will not be easy for him.
Taking over from former Socceroo Doug Utjesenovic Viera has attracted some new players, among them the talented midfielder Alex Araujo who was at St George until their relegation at the end of last season and Grant Bard from Sutherland, a very reliable and prolific striker for the Sharks for some years now.

RYDE CITY:

The Gunners will struggle again as funds are limited, but could emerge after a year establishing themselves to claim a top half of the table spot once they become settled in one ground for the season, a luxury they did not enjoy last term. A settled side will also help their cause.

Have picked up beanpole keeper Les Bihari from Eastern Suburbs and he should compensate for the loss of striker Matthew Borg who has returned to Fairfield Bulls now that his old club have joined the Super League elite. Borg was out injured most of last season anyway and is a day to day proposition nowadays.

SUTHERLAND SHARKS:

The Sharks are going to be a force again with John Lavin at the helm and though they only won 4 games last season they will be immeasurably better equipped this time around. The loss of some senior players may make it tough at first but this club has a tradition of making a little go a long way and they should again be among the clubs making good progress this year.

The teams in each of the remaining three divisions are as follows.

1ST DIVISION
A C United, Auburn United, Bathurst 75, Dulwich Hill (promoted), Hurstville City, Illawarra Lions, Manly-Warringah, Moorebank Sports, Penrith Panthers, Rockdale City Suns, Saint George, Stanmore Hawks – (Mount Pritchard, Hills United and Belmore were all relegated)

2ND DIVISION
Arncliffe Scots, Belmore Hercules, Gladesville United, Greystanes, Hajduk Wanderers, Hills United, Hurstville ZSC, Mount Druitt Town Rangers, Mount Pritchard, Sydney District, Sydney University (promoted), University of NSW - (Liverpool City and Parramatta City were both relegated)
* Alexander Warriors have been disbanded

3RD DIVISION
Camden Tigers, Colo Colo, Fraser Park (promoted), Glebe Wanderers, Hakoah, Liverpool City, Maroubra United, Parramatta City, Prospect United, Treasdavon, The Wanderers, White City
- (Granville Green Island and Hawkesbury City were both relegated)
* Flamengo have re-appeared in the guise of 'The Wanderers' a name they dropped last season

Coming Soon - Green Rover's Guide to Ground-hopping.

An attempt to assist NSW readers with navigation to the Federation's numerous grounds and clubs outside the major divisions. Also a rating for the food, the crowd and the facilities. (Readers' assistance welcome)

The 1999 Victorian Premier League...

kicks off on January 31 but you'll have to wait until next month to cop the full SU preview. In the meantime here's a list of the clubs and venues (and Melway references) and if you've got a need for more information before our next ish you cna always ring the VSF on (03) 9682-9666.

Altona East	Paisley Park, Cnr Mills St & Ross Rd, Altona North	55-D4
Altona Magic	Paisley Park, Cnr Mills St & Ross Rd, Altona North	55-D4
Bentleigh Greens	Kingston Heath Reserve, Ctr Dandenong Rd, Cheltenham	87-F2
Bulleen Inter Kings	Veneto Club, Bulleen Rd, Bulleen	32-D9
Fawkner Blues	CB Smith Reserve, Jukes Rd, Fawker	17-J2
Green Gully Cavaliers	Green Gully Reserve, Green Gully Rd, Keilor	14-E8
Melbourne Raiders	Partridge Reserve, Partridge St, Lalor	9-A3
Preston Lions	Goodyear Stadium, Broadhurst Ave, Reservoir	18-B2
Port Melbourne Sharks	SS Anderson Reserve, Plummer St, Port Melbourne	56-K1
South Dandenong	George Andrews Reserve, Trewin St, South Dandenong	90-D11
Springvale White Eagles	Serbian Sports Centre, Perry Rd, Keysbrough	94-G7
Sunshine Georgies	Chaplin Reserve, Anderson Rd, Sunshine	28-G12
St Albans Saints	Churchill Reserve, Fox St, St Albans	14-D10
Westvale	Green Gully Reserve, Green Gully Rd, Keilor	14-E8

See 'Look Out For' on Page 36

for early season fixture highlights.

Jonesy joins the '100 Club'

John Markovski became the ninth member of the unofficial '100 Club' on December 20 with his 33rd minute strike aginst Sydney Olympic at Belmore Oval. (Some journos reckon he's only the eighth, but close examination of the table below should prove us correct **)

Jonesy won't be the only inductee this season, however. Ivan Kelic is ready to break through, with Paul Trimboli and possibly even Andy Harper (although there's plenty of Brisbane fans who would back against that one...)

Anyway, it's time to once again celebrate the Magnificent Nine. We'll be back when it becomes ten! Which won't be too long if Ivan Kelic has anything to do with it....

In and Partying

137 Rod Brown
133 John Kosmina
119 Marshall Soper
111 Damian Mori (Mori has added a further 5 goals up to 4/1/98)
109 Gary Cole
104 Warren Spink
102 Frank Farina
102 Francis Awaritefe (Awaritefe has added a further 6 goals up to 4/1/98)

99 Mark Jankovic
96 Ivan Kelic (Kelic has added a further 3 goals up to 4/1/98)
93 Paul Trimboli (Trimboli has added 1 further goal up to 4/1/98)
92 John Markovski (Markovski has added a further 9 goals up to 4/1/98)
90 Andy Harper (Harper has added 1 further goal up to 4/1/98)

And the '300 Club' !

Yep, Markovski can put yet another club on his CV, after notching up his 300th NSL appearance in Perth's match at Newcastle. Sadly for Big John, even though he managed to celebrate the occasion with a goal, young Greg Owens stole the headlines with two killer goals in the last quarter of an hour to prevent yet another long party back across the Nullabor. Probably just as well...

Bye, Bye to the Level-Playing Field.....

There are plenty of coaches getting around who will tell you that a bye in their team's fixtures creates more problems than it is worth. Disrupting routines and all that, even if it does allow those niggling injuries to clear up.

But a quick glance at the results of teams 'after the bye' would indicate that it has proved good value for most clubs.

Only the Melbourne Knights (who kicked off in round two) and Newcastle have failed to gain at least a point which is bad news because they are two of twelve clubs who don't play at home twice after their bye (For the record, the lucky three clubs are Brisbane, Marconi and Northern Spirit).

Some would argue that Sydney Utd have the most favourable 'atb' draw, easing themselves back into the competition with a couple of games against Canberra, while at the other end of the scale, trouble looms for both South Melbourne and (to a lesser extent) Carlton.

South Melbourne have the 'benefit' of the bye in the final round which would be fine except that as a likely top-two finisher, they are entitled to a rest in the first week of the finals anyway. Carlton may not be so thrilled at having a bye in round 29 either, should they finish in the top two. One match in a month is not the ideal preparation for the finals.

And quite a few join the '200 Club'....

The high/low light was, of course, Velimir Kupresak, who was shown the red card for deliberate handball in his 200th NSL match (against Marconi), but Troy Cranney and Matt Horsley have also passed the mantorious milestone while a few Socceroos are destined to crack the barrier before season's end. Watch out for pre-match presentations in the coming months for Robbie Slater, Brad Maloney, Jason Polak, Nick Meredith, Graham Arnold, Kris Trajanovski, Mark Babic and maybe even Fausto De Amicis.

	To end of 97/98	98/99 (up to Rd 13)	Total
In and partying			
Velimir Kupresak	198	11	209
Troy Cranney	198	4	202
Matthew Horsley	191	11	202
Robbie Slater	189	10	199
Jason Polak	188	10	198
Brad Maloney	187	10	197
Held back by the bouncers			
Nick Meredith	182	11	193
Still looking for a car park			
Graham Arnold	178	11	189
Kris Trajanovski	177	10	187
Mark Babic	176	10	186
Fausto De Amicis	170	13	183
Still looking for a club?			
Matthew Bingley	189		189
Abbas Saad	174		174

** Special thanks to Andrew 'The Guru' Howe for his assistance in compiling the above material. What would we all do without ya, Andy?

In fact Angie Postecoglou might not want to be reminded of this but it's worth recounting the problem AFL club Essendon walked into in the 1990 season. Finishing on top of the table entitled them to a week off, but when Collingwood and the West Coast Eagles drew the Qualifying final, Essendon suddenly found themselves with two weeks off. They were subsequently belted in their first finals match by 63 points.

Melb Knights	Home	Wollongong	Lost	1-2
Gippsland	Home	Ad Sharks	Won	1-0
Wollongong	Home	Ad City	Drew	1-1
Ad Sharks	Home	Newcastle	Won	3-1
Ad City	Home	Nth Spirit	Won	2-0
Newcastle	Home	Marconi	Lost	1-2
Nth Spirit	Home	Brisbane	Drew	1-1
Marconi	Home	Syd Olympic	Won	2-1
Brisbane	Home	Sydney Utd	Drew	2-2
Syd Olympic	Home	Perth	Won	3-1
Syd Utd	Home	Canberra	Won	2-0
Perth	Home	Carlton	Won	3-0
Canberra	Home	South Melb	Lost	1-3
Carlton	Home	Melb Knights		
South Melb	Away	Gippsland		

Melb Knights	Away	Wollongong
Gippsland	Away	Melb Knights
Brisbane	Home	Nth Spirit
Marconi	Home	Canberra
Wollongong	Away	Ad City
Ad Sharks	Away	Newcastle
Ad City	Away	Nth Spirit
Newcastle	Away	Marconi
Nth Spirit	Home	Canberra
Syd Olympic	Away	Perth
Sydney Utd	Away	Canberra
Perth	Away	Carlton
Canberra	Away	South Melb
Carlton	Away	Melb Knights
South Melb	?? Week off before final?	

Did that REALLY happen?

DECEMBER

6 - Steve Horvat heads to London hoping his work permit problem will be sorted out before the end of the millenium.

9 - Joe Brondolino is re-elected president of the Victorian Soccer Federation for another two years. No change amongst the rest of the commissioners either. This may not be good.

10 - SocAus signs a new four-year deal with Adidas, who will supply the strips for all our international teams for around 1.3 million.

15 - The Mark Viduka saga continues, with Croatia Zagreb threatening to call FIFA unless Celtic 'pay up' within ten days.

18 - John Aloisi finally becomes a Premier League player after completing a 650,000-pound move from Portsmouth to Coventry. The Melbourne Knights face disciplinary problems after the visitors change rooms at Newcastle are 'trashed' following the 2-2 draw. MK pres Steve Mandekic reckons the abuse of Ransford Banini by some Newcastle supporters might need to be looked at by Soccer Australia.

20 - A night of nostalgia at Sydney Olympic as the current team defeat Perth Glory 3-1 and the club honours their former NSL stars before the match, allowing their diehard fans the opportunity to see how Raskopolos, Meier, Katholos, Koussos et al scrub up these days. The 'legends' also have a quick six-a-side during the half-time break and then nervously shuffle as the *'All-time Olympic NSL XI* is announced. And the winners are

Gary Meier (GK), David Barrett, Tony Spiradakos, Andrew Bemal, Graham Jennings, Vince Estavillo, Peter Raskopoulos (c), Peter Katholos, Brett Emerton, Chris Kalantzis, Marshall Soper

22 - Tansel Baser heads for Turkey after signing with Trabzonspor for the rest of the season.

26 - Mike Cockerill reports in the Sydney Morning Herald that Ajax Amsterdam are considering taking a stake in the ailing Canberra Cosmos.

27 - Wayne Dade is the centre of attention once again for allowing a late Marconi winner to stand after Mike Smith had bowled over Knights keeper John Didulica. Dade requires a police escort all the way to the airport after allegedly being spat on by Knights supporters in the tunnel after the game.... Meanwhile, the Newcastle Herald reports that 15 members of the Newcastle KB united side formed an impromptu re-union at the Valentine Bowling Club to catch up with England-based Ian Seddon and give him an opportunity to check out Peter Tredinnick's scrap books over a, er, few ales. Kaiser, Curran, Bertogna, they were all there.

28 - Kevin Muscat hits the headlines for the right reason - a cracking 89th minute winner against Ipswich to give Wolves a valuable 1-0 win.

29 - SocAus decides that the performance of Wayne Dade in the Knights v Marconi match (see above) will be reviewed.

JANUARY

3 - Sydney Utd go down 0-1 at South Melbourne and David Mitchell is not happy. "The referee got sucked in," says Dave, in a clear reference to the Souths players' habit of ensuring the referee sees every foul...

BULLETIN BOARD

Can't do better than quote direct from a Carlton Club News release...
CLUB MERCHANDISE - The Carlton Shop at Optus Oval is open tomorrow from 11am-5pm for those last minute Christmas presents. Rebel Sport in the City has sold out of the strips, but does have some t-shits available.
Sounds good, eh? Although we're not sure how many friends you'd make wearing a t-shit.....

Fanzines? Did somebody mention fanzines?

Didactic, Heuristic, Edifying...
See? And you thought we were running out of adjectives to describe Sitter! - The World Champion of international soccer fanzines (well, for last year, anyway). Superbly written by Bruce Holloway and his crew, it is essential reading if you are even remotely interested in what Auckland Kings are likely to get up to. Send a $5 Aussie note to **Sitter! - Bruce Holloway, 11 Thames St, Hamilton, NZ.**

Closer to home is The Fan Post, now up to issue 27 and still producing one of the best looking fanzines in the country. Damn how they do it for the princely price of $2, but you should definitely look for the TFP sellers outside Suncorp Stadium on match night or get on to
The Fan Post - Tony Moran, P O Box 478, Bulimba, Qld. 4171
Oh, and the interview with Gary Phillips (issues 26 & 27) was a pearler!

Not quite in the same bracket presentation-wise but lacking none of the passion and humour is 'My Blue Heaven' which first saw daylight at a Carlton home match just prior to Xmas. Along with the obligatory reasons why you're lucky you don't support South Melbourne, it contains varying levels of humour directed at everyone from their own players to alleged freelance getaway drivers. Get on to Sally at:
My Blue Heaven - P O Box 13078 Law Courts, Melbourne 3000 or e-mail
[illegible]@hotmail.com

Even Non-Surfers Can Catch This Wave....

No, you don't have to be connected to the Internet to get hold of 'The Wave', appropriately sub-titled 'Breaking News From the Oceania Football Confederation'.
We gave this a plug a while back and we can only continue to do so. A quality publication which is not afraid to include interviews with important administrators (see Alan Vessey interview in the December issue) on top of all the essential news you need from around the Pacific. It comes out quarterly (for now) and can be obtained via:
Oceania Football Confederation, P O Box 62 - 586, Central Park, Auckland, EnZed.

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"Premier League Players Records 1946-98" $65.00

Look Out For....*A Summer Smorgasbord of Soccer:*

Ericsson Cup Highlights:

January 26	Adelaide City v Carlton	Hindmarsh	8pm
January 26	Sydney Utd v Marconi	Edensor Park	5pm
January 29	Northern Spirit v Sydney Utd	Nth Sydney Oval	7:30pm
January 31	Sydney Olympic v Marconi	Belmore SC	6pm
February 7	South Melbourne v Melbourne Knights	Bob Jane	6pm
February 7	Sydney United v Adelaide City	Edensor Park	5pm
February 14	Northern Spirit v Carlton	Nth Sydney Oval	5pm
February 14	Sydney Olympic v Sydney United	Belmore SC	6pm

Victorian Premier League Highlights (see page 31 for venues)

Round 1	Jan 31	Fawkner Blues v St Albans Saints
	Feb 1	Bulleen Inter Kings v South Dandenong
Round 2	Feb 6	Altona Magic v Altona East
	Feb 7	Sunshine v Preston
Round 3	Feb 14	Preston v Altona
	Feb 14	Port Melbourne v Sunshine

And Green Rover selects the NSW Super League highlights:

February 7 - Ryde City v Fairfield Bulls	Wentworth Park
February 13 - Sutherland v Central Coast	Seymour Shaw
February 20 - Bonnyrigg v Parramatta Eagles	Serbian Centre
February 27 - Blacktown City v Central Coast	Cabbie Stadium

And he's helpful enough to point out the dogs to avoid this month (they are bitches to pick).

Most are good games in the month ahead, but I would not leave home if the very ground was next door to me, to see Bankstown and Canterbury at 5 o'clock on a Sunday afternoon at a sweltering unshaded Jensen Park, on 13th February when you consider that Olympic are at home the same day and it is likely to be a scorcher.

It will be a spiteful game I dare say, also Macarthur's game with Ryde may also be a humdrum affair at Lynwood Park on Saturday 27th where quality play is likely to be at a premium at this stage of the season, given the temperatures. But we have been wrong before....

Asians on tour - Perhaps.....

January 20 - Marconi v Pohang
February 4 - Wollongong v Chon Nam
February 6 - Marconi v Chon Nam
February 9 - Sydney Olympic v Chon Nam.

Check with the clubs for confirmation of these and all other fixtures involving touring Asian clubs. There are some nasty rumours getting about at the moment, so make sure you 'watch that space' even more diligently than usual. As is the norm in situations like this, we STRONGLY advise you get in contact with the host club to confirm kick-off times (at the very least....)

Marconi: (02) 9823-7289 Sydney Olympic (02) 9789-2922 Wollongong (02) 4226-3988